

Iridescence on Screen:

Media Stereotype and Representation of LGBTQ+ in South Korean Television Dramas



**UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE**

This dissertation is submitted to the University of Cambridge in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy in Sociology of Media and Culture.

Anonymous Marking Number: 000103

Word Count: 19,883

Submission Date: 09 June 2023

ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores how Korean television dramas represent the LGBTQ+ community, including recent changes, prospects, and limitations. 25 television dramas with LGBTQ+ characters and narratives are selected to comprise the corpus, with Critical Discourse Analysis as the main Methodology. Each conceptual framework of ‘Visibility’, ‘Representation’, ‘Disclosure’, ‘Framing’, and ‘Sexuality’ constitutes the main chapters of the analysis. They serve as five different lenses to investigate whether there are queer characters on screen, and if so, who they are, how they are displayed, and why they appear in narratives. The aim is to conduct a comparative study to inspect the field from a wider perspective and incorporate recent changes in the media industry, along with their influences on the LGBTQ+ community.

The analysis of the drama corpus elucidates five significant findings. Firstly, in terms of ‘Visibility’, both exposure and diversity have expanded over time, but most characters appear as supporting roles. Secondly, the ‘Representation’ is realistic as the dramas depict the detailed position of the characters within the narrative. Thirdly, there are several outing cases in ‘Disclosure’ and a limited spectrum of reactions after coming out, yet hopeful in that affirmative ones also exist. Fourthly, there remain limitations in ‘Framing’ after heteronormativity and stereotypes. Lastly, as for ‘Sexuality’, romance and intimacy are selectively manipulated and concealed. These five analyses assert the positive aspects of having more queer discourses on screen, but also acknowledge the drawbacks in that some still reinforce the dominant system. They become essential evidence in revealing the power dynamics and examining the realities of Korean

society. Overall, this dissertation guides the Korean media industry on how to deal with media in the direction of fairly representing, and ultimately, going along with the LGBTQ+ community.

Keywords: television drama, K-drama, LGBTQ+, critical discourse analysis (CDA)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation is dedicated to the LGBTQ+ individuals in Korea who are beneath the veil and denied the opportunity to live their lives true to themselves. I hope this dissertation can give them the courage to stand and the comfort to rest.

I want to express my gratitude to my parents and family who believed in me more than I did. Thanks to my supervisor Dr. Rachell Sanchez-Rivera for becoming the lighthouse throughout this journey. All of these would have been impossible without your help and support. Moreover, thank you, my dear Owlstoners, Armitage rangers, Queens' and Sociology cohort for the fabulous inspiration and wonderful memory. I will never forget the moments we laughed and cried together. I send my gratitude for my four years at Woori Bank. The pain let me know how much I love to research and write. Lastly, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Cambridge for giving me another chance to dream.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---------------------------------------------|-----------|
| 1. INTRODUCTION | 8 |
| 1.1 LGBTQ+ IN KOREAN MEDIA | 8 |
| 1.2 RESEARCH GAP..... | 11 |
| 1.3 RESEARCH QUESTION..... | 13 |
| 2. METHODOLOGY & METHODS..... | 16 |
| 2.1 RESEARCH METHOD | 16 |
| 2.2 RESEARCH SUBJECT | 17 |
| 2.3 PROCEDURES AND DETAILS | 21 |
| 2.4 LIMITATIONS AND CHALLENGES | 22 |
| 3. FINDINGS & ANALYSIS..... | 24 |
| 3.1 VISIBILITY..... | 24 |
| <i>a. Exposure.....</i> | 25 |
| a.1 Number of Character | 25 |
| a.2 Importance of Character | 27 |
| <i>b. Diversity.....</i> | 29 |
| b.1 Changes in Diversity | 29 |
| b.2 Limitations in Diversity..... | 30 |
| 3.2 REPRESENTATION..... | 35 |
| <i>c. Position</i> | 36 |
| c.1 Discrimination | 37 |
| c.2 Family Issue..... | 40 |

| | |
|--------------------------------------------|------------------|
| c.3 Broken Marriage..... | 43 |
| 3.3 DISCLOSURE | 45 |
| <i>d. Coming Out.....</i> | <i>46</i> |
| d.1 Unwanted Outing | 47 |
| d.2 Reaction to Disclosure..... | 49 |
| 3.4 FRAMING | 54 |
| <i>e. Heteronormativity</i> | <i>55</i> |
| e.1 Pseudo-homosexuality..... | 56 |
| e.2 Compare and Contrast | 58 |
| <i>f. Characteristics</i> | <i>60</i> |
| f.1 Gendered Homosexuality Frame | 60 |
| f.2 Unidimensional Frame..... | 65 |
| 3.5 SEXUALITY..... | 67 |
| <i>g. Romance.....</i> | <i>68</i> |
| g.1 Consequence of Love | 70 |
| g.2 Limitation in Love..... | 71 |
| <i>h. Intimacy.....</i> | <i>72</i> |
| h.1 De-sexualization..... | 73 |
| h.2 Editing Technique..... | 74 |
| 4. DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION..... | 79 |
| 4.1 PROSPECTS AND LIMITATIONS..... | 79 |
| 4.2 NECESSITY AND POTENTIALITY..... | 83 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY..... | 86 |

LIST OF FIGURES

| | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| <FIGURE 1. DRAMA CORPUS> | 20 |
| <FIGURE 2. CHARACTER NUMBER IN DRAMA CORPUS>..... | 26 |
| <FIGURE 3. THEME IN DRAMA CORPUS> | 30 |
| <FIGURE 4. ATLAS.TI CONCEPTS CLOUD> | 41 |
| <FIGURE 5. ATLAS.TI WORD FREQUENCY CLOUD> | 41 |
| <FIGURE 6. COMING OUT IN DRAMA CORPUS> | 47 |
| <FIGURE 7. <i>VINCENZO</i> CHARACTER> | 63 |
| <FIGURE 8. <i>STRONG GIRL BONG-SOON</i> CHARACTER> | 63 |
| <FIGURE 9. <i>EXTRAORDINARY ATTORNEY WOO</i> CHARACTER> | 65 |
| <FIGURE 10. <i>HOMETOWN CHA-CHA-CHA</i> CHARACTER> | 65 |
| <FIGURE 11. <i>MINE</i> CHARACTER> | 65 |
| <FIGURE 12. ROMANCE IN DRAMA CORPUS> | 69 |
| <FIGURE 13. <i>MINE</i> SCENE> | 75 |
| <FIGURE 14. <i>PRISON PLAYBOOK</i> SCENE> | 76 |
| <FIGURE 15. <i>LIFE IS BEAUTIFUL</i> SCENE> | 77 |

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 LGBTQ+ in Korean Media

-Mother: What is wrong with you? If you keep this up, your brother will lock you up in a mental institution.

-Cho-hui: Mom! I am not crazy. I am perfectly fine. How is liking someone an illness?

-Mother: You are wrong. This is all because I raised you wrong. It is all my fault.

-Cho-hui: Mom. It is not your fault. It is not. It is not my fault either.

-Mother: No, Cho-hui. This is not how you should live your life.

The above is a dialogue between a lesbian daughter and her mother in the drama *Hometown Cha-Cha-Cha* (2021). This conversation is not merely fictional but represents the status quo of the LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, and more) community in Korean society. By critically analyzing these dialogues and narratives in television dramas, this dissertation aims to reveal the power dynamics and examine the realities of sexual minorities. To fully comprehend the flow, the struggle, and the shifts up to now, the discourse should first trace back to the history of the LGBTQ+ community in Korea. Before the 1990s, there had not been any terminology to define people with diverse sexual orientations and identities (D. Seo, 2005). The LGBTQ+ individuals were grouped together and referred to as “homo” and “gay” (Kang, 2020; D. Seo, 2001). They faced social unacceptance and neglect, as only pervert sexual desires had been intentionally cropped. This was mostly because sexual

behavior and action, which are highly prejudiced, were seen over identity (Park, 2018).

As late as the mid-1990s, the LGBTQ+ community had risen as a topic of social controversy with the establishment of gay and lesbian organizations in major Korean universities (Park, 2018; D. Seo, 2001). The dispute rebounded entering 2000, as entertainer Suk-chon Hong came out as gay in front of reporters and Risu Ha marked her debut on screen as a transgender woman (J. Kim, 2012; H. Lee & Ryu, 2018; Yi et al., 2019). As they openly unveiled themselves in mass media, they were both underrepresented and misrepresented as a tool to justify patriarchal heteronormativity (Park & Lee, 2013). They had been falsely drawn to fit into the societal gender boundaries to undermine their symbolic power and force them to succumb to certain stereotypes or even reproduce stereotypes. Instead, Hong and Ha had been commodified to cater to the entertainment and curiosity of the majority audience. These aspects reflect a reductionist view as they connote that every distress Hong and Ha are going through is not something of the society, but merely a personal one.

To this time, the LGBTQ+ community in Korea has been considered taboo and treated as invisible (Bong, 2008; J. Seo, 2010). That is to say, Korea ranked 64th among 197 countries regarding LGBTQ+ rights by rating 54 points in the equality index, 69 points in the legal index, and 38 points in the public opinion index this year (Equaldex, 2023). According to the Stonewall Report (2018), 79% of Korean participants replied that never have seen any LGBTQ+ people around them. Not tilting to either drastic end, the Korean government and society have maintained a passive stance in embracing the LGBTQ+ community.

The current state of the community remains intact in the depiction of sexual

minorities on screen. It is crucial to focus on the media representation of minorities as visibility itself reveals the power dynamics of the community. What is shown and iterated on the screen depends on what possesses power (McPherson, 2022). This is the reason for the struggles to achieve visibility over others and acquire recognition in the public space (Bae, 2023; Thompson, 2005). According to Larry Gross (2001), social minority groups including sexual minorities are often invisible in media, and even if they appear, they are mostly represented after their biases or in a way that suits the interest of the majority audience. As the majority adheres to the existing gender norms and heteronormativity, the LGBTQ+ community is recognized “in roles that support the natural order” and is “thus narrowly drawn” (p. 14).

Similarly, Korean media often has depicted the LGBTQ+ community in a way that complies with the dominant system or trivial entertainment (Park & Lee, 2013). For instance, Korean media portrays same-sex relationships to put a more feminine or masculine frame on one side of the partner and conform them to heteronormativity (Kim & Min, 2012). Such framing makes it possible for the majority audience to focus on the romantic relationship rather than minority rights and social limitations (J. Hong, 2008). Korean media also applies diverse editing techniques and selects preferable images from same-sex relationships to enable the majority audience, especially females, to satisfy their visual pleasure (H. Lee, 2009).

Whereas it is crucial to analyze the history of media productions and representations, it is equally significant to question whether these portrayals linger until today. That is to say, the Korean media industry has recently gone through epochal transformations, largely driven by global advancements in media technology.

Technology, entailing the introduction of digital media (Craig et al., 2015; Pullen & Cooper, 2010; Yoon, 2018), the development of diverse media platforms (Jang et al., 2022; Mulla, 2022), and the influx of global media content (Ayoub & Garretson, 2017; Longan et al., 1997), enabled people to open their views and escape their doctrines outside the borderline after increased media exposure or “Media Contact” (Riggle et al., 1996; Schiappa et al., 2006). With different degrees and speeds, Korean society also came to approach different social norms and cultures in line with global transformations (Jin & Kwak, 2018). Most importantly, the change in media ecology led to the change in LGBTQ+-related media. As a result, more queer characters and narratives have recently been dealt with on screen.

1.2 Research Gap

Korean media is gradually shifting in an unprecedented direction, especially in the portrayal of the LGBTQ+ community. However, there is a lack of research on those contemporary transitions, effects, and prospects. In Korea, there are only a few researchers who are alerted by how media deals with LGBTQ+ issues. They mostly narrow their research on certain media production or celebrity, particular sexual orientation or identity, and negative representation of the community. For instance, Ji Hoon Park and Jin Lee (2013) navigate televisual images of the celebrities Hong and Ha, as mentioned earlier. Jia Hong (2008) centers the research on the drama *Coffee Prince* (2007), while Ja-hye Lee (2012), Seo Youn Cho (2012), and Jeong Seon Kim (2012) delve into homosexuality in the drama *Life is Beautiful* (2010). J. S. Kim and Young Min (2012) discuss gay romance in the films *The King and the Clown* (2005), *A*

Frozen Flower (2008), and *Antique* (2008), which are further developed in Hyung-sook Lee's (2009) study on visual pleasure where she compares these films to *Brokeback Mountain* (2005). They also have expanded insight into camera effects and visual aesthetics. As the number of research is seriously lacking, their analysis becomes a foundation for continuing the research on LGBTQ+-related media studies. Their findings will be constantly referenced in the 'Findings and Analysis' as they become the groundwork for comparison.

Nonetheless, there still exists a blank in the research. The past studies do not see the wood for the trees and center on media productions that are released more than a decade ago. They primarily concentrate on one to three dramas or films featuring gay characters. These studies help penetrate deep into a few productions or sexualities but are insufficient in reviewing the flow as a whole, including the latest shifts. It is now time to build more onto the basis to inspect the field in a wider scope. Rather than focusing on a specific person or production and a particular sexual orientation or identity, this research aims to encompass diverse LGBTQ+ communities. Additionally, whereas the previous comparative studies have mainly concentrated on films, this research acquires its originality by spotlighting television dramas, one of the most accessible and influential media platforms (Davin & Jackson, 2008; Shrum, 1995; Slater et al., 2006). It will help reach out to the unprecedented field of exploration.

Most importantly, positive changes as well as lingering limitations should be discussed altogether to create meaningful differences. In fact, due to the misrepresentation and underrepresentation of past productions, most of the previous research is based on how media reproduces stereotypes and deteriorates LGBTQ+

rights. It is pivotal to be aware of the negative effect of media. Nevertheless, media ecology is transforming at a fast pace along with LGBTQ+-related media. Hence, this research not only contemplates the grieving history, but also discovers the positive transitions that have recently emerged.

1.3 Research Question

This dissertation delves into the research question of how the LGBTQ+ community is represented in Korean television dramas, and whether there are changes, prospects, and limitations. The research question can be broken down as follows: How and why are the sexual minority characters ‘visible’ on screen? In what way are they ‘represented’ in the narratives? What are the depictions and reactions to the ‘disclosure’? Are there any aspects that they are ‘framed’ in? How is their ‘sexuality’ demonstrated? By thematically addressing these questions in each chapter, this study aspires to contribute to comprehending the general portrayal of the LGBTQ+ community, shed light on the status quo, and provide insights for future directions in this field of research.

I have chosen 25 dramas with LGBTQ+ characters or narratives to comprise the corpus. The dramas are aired in the 21st century, ranging from 2007 to 2022, to view the broad timeline as well as include the latest productions. There will be a thorough examination and comparison of each drama based on five distinct categories, using the Methodology of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The discourses from the drama corpus will be implemented as the primary source for analysis to relate to Korean society and uncover the power dynamics within. In this regard, this research can

introduce positive alterations and remaining tasks in media representations. Besides, the analysis can settle as a benchmark for future comparative studies with other media formats and upcoming productions.

With the five conceptual frameworks of ‘Visibility’, ‘Representation’, ‘Disclosure’, ‘Framing’, and ‘Sexuality’, there will be an in-depth discourse on how sexual minorities are demonstrated in the narratives. These frameworks are selected to unveil the implicit power relations within the context and scrutinize diverse facets of the community. To specify, the ‘Visibility’ chapter includes ‘*Exposure*’ and ‘*Diversity*’, the ‘Representation’ chapter includes ‘*Position*’, the ‘Disclosure’ chapter includes ‘*Coming Out*’, the ‘Framing’ chapter includes ‘*Heteronormativity*’ and ‘*Characteristics*’, and the ‘Sexuality’ chapter includes ‘*Romance*’ and ‘*Intimacy*’ subchapters respectively. Each chapter will not only identify improvements compared to the past, but also critically address challenges that continue to persist. This research will be of critical help in grasping the recent changes in new media productions and discovering the status quo of the LGBTQ+ community in the turbulent media industry. In addition, it will serve as the standard of how and where there need further enhancements in eradicating stereotypes and facing sexual minority rights.

In this dissertation, there is no separate ‘Literature Review’ as the underlying theory and framework are embedded in each chapter in the ‘Findings and Analysis’. At the beginning of each section, there is an introduction to the concept and an explanation of related theories respectively. Since there are as many as five categories of analysis, I found it more logical to thematically divide the literature to provide a more detailed development and coherence for each chapter. Moreover, the ‘Methodology and

Methods' discusses the criteria for selecting the drama corpus and how CDA is applied. Next in the 'Findings and Analysis', five categories of analysis are illustrated with dialogues, tables, and photos. Lastly, in the 'Discussion and Conclusion', there is an overall arrangement of prospects and limitations.

2. METHODOLOGY & METHODS

2.1 Research Method

Since this research aspires to focus on narratives, dialogues, and power dynamics within television dramas, the qualitative research method is implemented throughout the analysis. The data collection is primarily based on textual content rather than quantitative measurements (Bryman, 2016). Among diverse qualitative methods, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is predominantly utilized. CDA is a methodology that links language and its modes of use to search for power relations within society. It emphasizes the role of discourse in revealing the embedded socio-cultural norms, especially “how inequality is enacted, reproduced, legitimated, and resisted by text and talk” (van Dijk, 2015, p. 466). The difference with ordinary discourse analysis is that CDA pursues the cause of humanly produced constraints, its historical explanation, and possibilities to transform reality (Fairclough, 2012). This is the reason Michel Foucault (2013) insisted that discourse is more than a group of signs but practices that actively enroll in designation and subjectification. The whole range of printed and recorded texts along with visual images is considered a part of a discourse and forms a corpus of analysis (Gibbs, 2018). The principal power dynamics this dissertation will investigate are over sexual minorities and the major corpus will be composed of television dramas.

To specify, Fairclough’s (1995) three-dimensional model of CDA is employed to dissect the dramas, as it is essential to consider the detailed discourses from a narrow perspective and implied power dynamics from a broad perspective. By following the three phases of “description”, “interpretation”, and “explanation”, this research explores

how text is processed within a discourse and connected to socio-cultural practices. Since the message and underlying power are often implicitly conveyed in dramas through stories and discourses, it is necessary to construe not only the superficial dialogues but also the connoted context. This dissertation will arrange and organize diverse stories and discourses to figure out the power dynamics on screen and their connection to reality. Here, the story refers to the event that is caused or experienced by the characters and the discourse refers to the manifestation of the event in the narrative (Chatman, 2007). In addition, for further analysis of particular scenes, visual aesthetics and mise-en-scenes, including camera techniques, lighting, and background music, are taken into account. It is because, for certain scenes, camera movement and constructed atmosphere bear more message and potency than just a discourse (Coleman, 2010).

2.2 Research Subject

Television dramas are the central subject of this research for their profit model and industry structure in Korea, which render the drama market to stagnate. In Korea, there are three major network television stations, namely Munhwa Broadcasting Corporation (MBC), Korean Broadcasting System (KBS), and Seoul Broadcasting System (SBS) (Ju, 2017). They have been dominant over diverse television programs, including dramas, and their hegemony is still pervasive today. Entering the mid-2000s, high-profile cable channels, such as tvN and ENA, and comprehensive television channels, such as JTBC and Channel A, have emerged as strong rivals (Jin, 2016). Due to their profit structure centered on advertisements, there are shortcomings in diversity and creativity (Jang et al., 2022; Walker & Ferguson, 1998). As commercial success is the

bottom line measure for television dramas, producers primarily value content and narrative that can appeal to a large audience as well as advertisers (Bielby et al., 1999). Therefore, drama producers lean toward safe pathways that can save costs and avoid any critical failures. In other words, clichés that acquired success in the past and narratives that entertain the majority audience are repetitively reused.

In contrast, movie industries and over-the-top (OTT) platforms are arranged under different production purposes, profit models, and distribution channels. As for independent movies, since they are often produced for a specific audience to deliver a particular message apart from commercial enterprises, more films depicting the lives of sexual minority individuals are directed (D. Han, 2008; Park, 2021). Besides, commercial movies have also found their unique way of including LGBTQ+ narratives to entertain the majority audience with visual pleasure, which will be explained in depth in the ‘Findings and Analysis’ (J. S. Kim & Min, 2012). Lastly, as OTT services profit after the Subscription Video-on-Demand (SVOD) model, it is less necessary to consider the viewing rate and advertising companies. With the investment from OTT platform enterprises, directors have more freedom to produce unprecedented Original Series covering various content and genres (Jang et al., 2022).

Thus, television dramas are chosen as research subjects as they are more conservative and passive in an attempt to change, whereas they are more accessible and open to many and unspecified audience compared to other media platforms. Since they are sensitive to audience responses and viewer ratings, they also are slow in allowing any discourses related to the LGBTQ+ community. That is to say, since the late 1990s, homosexuality has been mostly aired on screen in drama special forms (J. Hong, 2008).

They are mostly not broadcasted as regular dramas or weekend dramas, but as drama specials that end in a single day or two. Nonetheless, entering the 21st century, there have been gradual changes in the television drama industry. In this regard, there needs further research on whether there are changes in television dramas in exposing sexual minority characters over time, how they are represented or framed, and what the improvements and remaining tasks are.

| | NAME | THEME | YEAR | CHANNEL | EP. |
|----|----------------------------|-------------|---------|---------|-----|
| 1 | Coffee Prince | Gay | 2007 | MBC | 17 |
| 2 | You're Beautiful | Gay | 2009 | SBS | 16 |
| 3 | Life is Beautiful | Gay | 2010 | SBS | 63 |
| 4 | Sungkyunkwan Scandal | Gay | 2010 | KBS2 | 20 |
| 5 | Personal Taste | Gay | 2010 | MBC | 16 |
| 6 | Reply 1994 | Bisexual | 2013 | tvN | 21 |
| 7 | Schoolgirl Detectives | Lesbian | 2014-15 | JTBC | 14 |
| 8 | Love in the Moonlight | Gay | 2016 | KBS2 | 18 |
| 9 | Cheese in the Trap | Gay | 2016 | tvN | 16 |
| 10 | Strong Girl Bong-soon | Gay | 2017 | JTBC | 16 |
| 11 | Prison Playbook | Gay | 2017-18 | tvN | 16 |
| 12 | Graceful Family | Transgender | 2019 | MBN | 16 |
| 13 | Be Melodramatic | Gay | 2019 | JTBC | 16 |
| 14 | At Eighteen | Gay | 2019 | JTBC | 16 |
| 15 | Itaewon Class | Transgender | 2020 | JTBC | 16 |
| 16 | My Unfamiliar Family | Gay | 2020 | tvN | 16 |
| 17 | Sweet Munchies | Gay | 2020 | JTBC | 12 |
| 18 | Vincenzo | Gay | 2021 | tvN | 20 |
| 19 | Mine | Lesbian | 2021 | tvN | 16 |
| 20 | The King's Affection | Gay | 2021 | KBS2 | 20 |
| 21 | Hometown Cha-Cha-Cha | Lesbian | 2021 | tvN | 16 |
| 22 | Under the Queen's Umbrella | Transgender | 2022 | tvN | 16 |
| 23 | The Killer's Shopping List | Transgender | 2022 | tvN | 8 |
| 24 | Extraordinary Attorney Woo | Lesbian | 2022 | ENA | 16 |

| | | | | | |
|----|------------|-----|------|------|----|
| 25 | The Empire | Gay | 2022 | JTBC | 16 |
|----|------------|-----|------|------|----|

<Figure 1. Drama Corpus>

In total, 25 television dramas are selected to comprise the corpus for analysis as in <Figure 1>. It demonstrates the name of the drama, the theme each drama includes, the year it is broadcasted, the television channel, and the number of total episodes. They are chosen based on four criteria. Firstly, they should be produced in the 21st century, which enables this research to investigate recent productions and up-to-date changes. Secondly, they should contain at least one LGBTQ+-related theme, narrative, and character. Thirdly, they should be commercial dramas that are screened on television at least once. This standard excludes web dramas or independent productions. Lastly, they should have at least three episodes and aired on screen for more than three days. Consequently, drama specials and omnibus dramas are removed from the list.

Built upon these criteria, several drama candidates ultimately are ruled out from the corpus. For instance, *Sad Temptation* (1999) is excluded because of the first and last criteria. *Hyung Young Dang Diary* (2014), *Hello Dracula* (2020), and *O'PENing: XX+XY* (2022) are also erased due to the last criteria. As for *Romance Is a Bonus Book* (2019) and *Secret Garden* (2010-2011), there either is a queer character or a narrative, but not both. *The Good Wife* (2016) satisfies all the criteria but is excluded since it originated from a drama with the same name in the United States. Besides, *Perfect Love* (2003) and *Beating Heart* (2005) are not on the list as they present real sexual minority celebrities and Park and Lee (2013) have already conducted research on these individuals. Among *Reply 1997* (2012) and *Reply 1994* (2013), the latter is selected.

While both are produced in series by the same producer, the latest one contains unconventional characters and narratives, which provide more room for discussion.

2.3 Procedures and Details

Based on the drama corpus, transcription has been created after reviewing relevant episodes that contain either LGBTQ+ characters or narratives. The dramas are all translated into English since they are in Korean. 14 dramas available on Netflix, including *Coffee Prince* (2007), *You're Beautiful* (2009), *Love in the Moonlight* (2016), *Prison Playbook* (2017-2018), *Be Melodramatic* (2019), *At Eighteen* (2019), *Itaewon Class* (2020), *My Unfamiliar Family* (2020), *Vincenzo* (2021), *Mine* (2021), *The King's Affection* (2021), *Hometown Cha-Cha-Cha* (2021), *Under the Queen's Umbrella* (2022), and *Extraordinary Attorney Woo* (2022), provide English subtitles. Therefore, those subtitles are used for the transcript. Additionally, *Life is Beautiful* (2010) is only available on YouTube and the other 15 dramas are on a Korean OTT platform named TVING. Since they do not provide any English subtitles, I translated relevant dialogues into English myself.

While transcribing the dramas, I manually organized the narratives into several codes. Coding is the process of defining the data subject to analysis (Gibbs, 2018). It involves “identifying and recording one or more passages of text”, which becomes the ingredients of an idea, and then linking “with a name for that idea”, which becomes the code (p. 2). The identified codes in the transcript are ‘Weak Point’, ‘Discrimination’, ‘Family Issue’, ‘Marriage’, ‘Coming Out’, ‘Deception’, ‘Appearance’, ‘Physical Touch’, ‘Unrequited Love’, ‘Romance’, ‘Broken Relationship’, and ‘Sexual Desire’.

The first four codes are implemented for the 'Representation' chapter in exploring the positions of queer characters in narratives. The fifth code is for the 'Disclosure' chapter in capturing the moment of coming out and the reactions of others. The next two codes are linked to the 'Framing' chapter to examine the stereotypes, and the last five codes provide the basis for the loves and relationships in the 'Sexuality' chapter.

Furthermore, computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) called ATLAS.ti is used to measure the concept types and word frequencies in the transcript. They are formed in word clouds and are inserted in the 'Findings and Analysis'. Among others, I chose ATLAS.ti as it operates as a visual and spatial medium to create pictorial forms of interconnected and hypertext data (Barry, 1998). It is especially effective in assaying relationships and narrowing the focus in discourse analysis (Paulus & Lester, 2016).

2.4 Limitations and Challenges

The limitation of this research is that the intentions of the producers are not counted in the analysis. Text is a unit of meaning which contains message, and the meaning is intertextually determined when it is encoded by its creators and decoded by its readers (Hall, 1980). Although CDA provides a broad picture of how the message is encoded when produced, it does not directly answer why. That being the case, it is recommended that future studies incorporate interviews with directors or scriptwriters of television dramas to concretely comprehend the inclusion of queer discourses.

There are two research challenges I confronted while conducting the research.

Firstly, in accessing the selected dramas, I did not use any illegal methods. I paid for Netflix and TVING for 24 dramas, and for the last one, used YouTube. Secondly, as a heterosexual individual analyzing LGBTQ+-related context, I was cautious not to be judgmental in organizing codes and defining power relations. As it is easy for the majority groups to belittle discriminations and stereotypes they have not experienced, I attempted to delve into queer theories, news reports, and interviews to look squarely at the reality we are in. I did not set the conclusion before determining the research question but was open to the result while collecting data and exploring the corpus.

3. FINDINGS & ANALYSIS

3.1 VISIBILITY

The first chapter of the analysis is ‘Visibility’, and it explores how sexual minority characters appear in the dramas. Nowadays, there is an increase in the number of dramas that contain LGBTQ+ characters and narratives. Entering the late 1990s, short drama specials marked the beginning of the emergence of queer characters in narratives, including *Sad Temptation* (1999) (J. Hong, 2008). Since then, more dramas with queer characters have been produced, although there are differences in the degree of exposure and diversity. In other words, the level of visibility has gradually increased.

Such visibility has a significant influence on power dynamics for it determines what is to be seen and spread (McPherson, 2022). By gaining visibility, the LGBTQ+ community can achieve more recognition and acknowledgment in the public space, which entails a higher possibility of enhancing their rights and overcoming stereotypes. It is crucial as a lack of power often entails a lack of visibility, which can lead to “death by neglect” (Thompson, 2005). This is also referred to as symbolic annihilation after underrepresentation (Gerbner & Gross, 1976). It occurs when the number of minorities that appears in media is much less or even converges to none than the actual number in society. As certain communities get marginalized in media, their social existence and importance in public also diminish.

The next step after acquiring visibility is to examine in what way it is displayed in media since visibility is a double-edged sword (Benjamin, 2019). Hypervisibility or

overrepresentation may reversely conclude in heightening surveillance and undermining minorities (Foucault, 1991). Furthermore, as visibility is difficult to control, too much privacy can be divulged or it can even result in bad visibility in which the individuals are seen but not recognized by the public (McPherson, 2022; Thompson, 2005). Hence, it is pivotal to investigate how the LGBTQ+ community is exposed in terms of number and diversity in media. This chapter is divided into ‘*Exposure*’ and ‘*Diversity*’ subchapters. Measuring how queer characters are visible on the screen will help us understand how much power is given to sexual minorities and whether there are differences compared to the past.

a. Exposure

a.1 Number of Character

More queer characters are exposed in current media as society comes to shift its perception of different sexual orientations and identities from mental illness to new syndrome (J. S. Kim & Min, 2012). The LGBTQ+ themes are sought as original and unconventional on screen. <Figure 2> below demonstrates the number of queer characters in the drama corpus. Compared to the past, queer characters appear on screen at a more constant pace and the interval is narrowing in recent years. In detail, there appear three characters in one drama, two characters in eight dramas, one character in eleven dramas, and no queer character in five dramas. These five dramas without any queer characters are the ones related to pseudo-homosexuality. Female characters in these dramas disguise themselves as the opposite sex and confuse the male characters about their sexual orientations. They will be thoroughly discussed in the ‘Framing’

chapter. Other than that, it is noticeable that almost half of the dramas, which is 44%, in the corpus contain only one queer character. This explains that queer character couples that get involved in a romantic relationship or continue to maintain their relationship seldom appear in the plot.

| | NAME | THEME | YEAR | NUMBER |
|----|----------------------------|-------------|---------|--------|
| 1 | Coffee Prince | Gay | 2007 | 0 |
| 2 | You're Beautiful | Gay | 2009 | 0 |
| 3 | Life is Beautiful | Gay | 2010 | 2 |
| 4 | Sungkyunkwan Scandal | Gay | 2010 | 0 |
| 5 | Personal Taste | Gay | 2010 | 1 |
| 6 | Reply 1994 | Bisexual | 2013 | 1 |
| 7 | Schoolgirl Detectives | Lesbian | 2014-15 | 2 |
| 8 | Love in the Moonlight | Gay | 2016 | 0 |
| 9 | Cheese in the Trap | Gay | 2016 | 2 |
| 10 | Strong Girl Bong-soon | Gay | 2017 | 1 |
| 11 | Prison Playbook | Gay | 2017-18 | 3 |
| 12 | Graceful Family | Transgender | 2019 | 1 |
| 13 | Be Melodramatic | Gay | 2019 | 2 |
| 14 | At Eighteen | Gay | 2019 | 1 |
| 15 | Itaewon Class | Transgender | 2020 | 1 |
| 16 | My Unfamiliar Family | Gay | 2020 | 2 |
| 17 | Sweet Munchies | Gay | 2020 | 1 |
| 18 | Vincenzo | Gay | 2021 | 1 |
| 19 | Mine | Lesbian | 2021 | 2 |
| 20 | The King's Affection | Gay | 2021 | 0 |
| 21 | Hometown Cha-Cha-Cha | Lesbian | 2021 | 1 |
| 22 | Under the Queen's Umbrella | Transgender | 2022 | 1 |
| 23 | The Killer's Shopping List | Transgender | 2022 | 1 |
| 24 | Extraordinary Attorney Woo | Lesbian | 2022 | 2 |
| 25 | The Empire | Gay | 2022 | 2 |

<Figure 2. Character Number in Drama Corpus>

a.2 Importance of Character

Despite the increase in exposure of LGBTQ+ themes, queer characters in these dramas mostly are deprived of their chances to stay at the center of narratives. They do not acquire a central role in deciding the flow but instead support the other characters in soothing the tension or entertaining them with pranks (J. Hong, 2008; H. Lee & Ryu, 2018). Otherwise, they take on the role of gathering attention for their erotic behaviors and beautiful appearance.

In fact, out of the 25 dramas in the corpus, only one of them has a queer character as the main protagonist. Others are mostly supporting characters who either help or attack the main protagonist. Some of them still possess the power to affect certain parts of the plot, such as being the main protagonist's family member, coworker, or friend. However, since they do not stand at the core of the narrative, the story fails to focus on discussing sexual minorities in detail. The discourses on their endeavors for equal rights, relationships with family, and even romance appear but only last in a couple of episodes. For instance, *Schoolgirl Detectives* (2014-2015) airs lesbian couples in two episodes and *Cheese in the Trap* (2016) deals with gay couples only in a single episode. They achieved visibility, but not enough to include diverse aspects of sexual minorities.

Seo-hyun in *Mine* (2021) can be considered the queer character that has the most significance in the drama corpus. She is one of the two main protagonists that holds the crucial key in the plot and is the closest helper to the other main protagonist. She, as the mistress of the wealthy family, controls the household and later becomes the owner of the company. She assists the other protagonist to survive in the new family and even helps her escape in the end. For the importance of the character, the drama handles to

demonstrate Seo-hyun's distress in giving up on her love and concealing her emotions to a considerable extent. Yet, the main content itself is skewed toward solving the murder mystery and the power struggle in the wealthy family rather than focusing on the sexual minority itself.

Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that there has been significant progress in discussing the LGBTQ+ community. Back in *Secret Garden* (2010-2011), there appears a gay character, but the entire storyline has nothing to do with his love, adversity, or life. In comparison, all 25 dramas in the corpus at least speak about the existence and position of queer characters in society to some extent. They include episodes of queer characters dealing with coming out, romance, and even harsh discrimination to deliver a message throughout the narratives. They do not entirely spotlight sexual minorities but still attempt to expose more queer characters and display more LGBTQ+-related content compared to the past.

Most dramas that either have queer characters as main protagonists or center their plot solely on sexual minorities are exclusively produced in two ways. The first way is through OTT platforms or social media channels. For instance, Netflix has Original Series entirely committed to LGBTQ+. The second way is through drama specials. They only last for single or two episodes and are aired for a couple of days. There also had been twists and turns as there was an occasion when the drama special *Hyung Young Dang Diary* (2014) faced protests and condemnations (J. Lee, 2014). It was about two gay men in the Chosun dynasty and their tragic romance. Although the drama won the 2006 Drama Script Award by Magazine T and Yellow Film, it was produced eight years later and even failed to air its second episode. These drama productions are not included

in the drama corpus as explained in the ‘Methodology and Methods’.

b. Diversity

b.1 Changes in Diversity

Apart from the level of exposure, it is also essential to consider the diversity of queer characters on screen, as the degree of discourse among diverse sexual orientations and identities can differ (Park & Lee, 2013). <Figure 3> unpacks the sexual orientation or identity of queer characters in the drama corpus and labels them in themes. For instance, gay-themed dramas contain at least one gay character or narrative. They include pseudo-homosexuality dramas, in which male characters misunderstand themselves as gays but turn out to be straight. Among the drama corpus, 64% include gay themes, 16% include lesbian themes, another 16% include transgender themes, and only 4%, which is one drama among 25 dramas, contain a bisexual theme. Likewise, most LGBTQ+-related dramas mostly are concentrated on gay themes. It is also notable that diversity increased after entering 2020. The number of dramas that contain LGBTQ+ themes other than gay themes gradually expands. Among the four dramas produced in 2022, two are related to transgender themes, and the other two cover lesbian and gay themes respectively.

| | NAME | THEME | CHARACTER | YEAR |
|---|-------------------|-------|--------------------|------|
| 1 | Coffee Prince | Gay | Han-kyul | 2007 |
| 2 | You're Beautiful | Gay | Jeremy | 2009 |
| 3 | Life is Beautiful | Gay | Kyung-soo/Tae-seop | 2010 |

| | | | | |
|----|----------------------------|-------------|-----------------|---------|
| 4 | Sungkyunkwan Scandal | Gay | Seon-jun | 2010 |
| 5 | Personal Taste | Gay | Jin-ho | 2010 |
| 6 | Reply 1994 | Bisexual | Smiley | 2013 |
| 7 | Schoolgirl Detectives | Lesbian | Soo-yeon | 2014-15 |
| 8 | Love in the Moonlight | Gay | Prince | 2016 |
| 9 | Cheese in the Trap | Gay | Joo-yong | 2016 |
| 10 | Strong Girl Bong-soon | Gay | Odolbbyo | 2017 |
| 11 | Prison Playbook | Gay | Herong | 2017-18 |
| 12 | Graceful Family | Transgender | Wan-jun | 2019 |
| 13 | Be Melodramatic | Gay | Hyo-bong | 2019 |
| 14 | At Eighteen | Gay | O-je | 2019 |
| 15 | Itaewon Class | Transgender | Hyun-yi | 2020 |
| 16 | My Unfamiliar Family | Gay | Dr. Yoon | 2020 |
| 17 | Sweet Munchies | Gay | Chef | 2020 |
| 18 | Vincenzo | Gay | Min-seong | 2021 |
| 19 | Mine | Lesbian | Seo-hyun | 2021 |
| 20 | The King's Affection | Gay | Ji-woon | 2021 |
| 21 | At Eighteen | Lesbian | Cho-hui | 2021 |
| 22 | Under the Queen's Umbrella | Transgender | Prince Gyeseong | 2022 |
| 23 | The Killer's Shopping List | Transgender | Fish | 2022 |
| 24 | Extraordinary Attorney Woo | Lesbian | Bride | 2022 |
| 25 | The Empire | Gay | Kang-baek | 2022 |

<Figure 3. Theme in Drama Corpus>

b.2 Limitations in Diversity

Nonetheless, there are remaining limitations to diversity. Firstly, themes other than gay, lesbian, and transgender are seriously lacking overall. There still are no television dramas that match the corpus standards which brings out other LGBTQ+ communities including asexual, pansexual, intersex, and non-binary. In fact, the drama special *O'PENing: XX+XY* (2022) deals with asexual and intersex characters. Despite the unconventional attempt to mention intersex on television, it is excluded from the corpus

like other drama specials as it does not meet the criteria.

Furthermore, current dramas tend to give enough explanation for queer characters' sexual orientations and identities, but merely do not often provide the exact wordings. For instance, in *Vincenzo* (2021), it is mentioned that Min-seong's previous relationships are all with men and it is "just his personal preference". Also, in *Strong Girl Bong-soon* (2017), Bong-soon states that her boss has a "taste for liking men". They are sufficient to designate their sexual orientations and identities, except for the direct terms. Among the drama corpus, there appear the words "gay" in four dramas, "homosexual" in two dramas, "transgender" in three dramas, and "sexual minority" in one drama. Even considering that there are four historical dramas in which exact terms had not existed by then, the number of dramas that designate clear identity or orientation is less than half.

It is also worth attention that all four lesbian dramas failed to use the word "lesbian" in the narratives. *Schoolgirl Detectives* (2014-2015) and *Mine* (2021) employ the words "homosexual" and "sexual minority" each. *Hometown Cha-Cha-Cha* (2021) and *Extraordinary Attorney Woo* (2022) do not contain any designating wordings, but reveal their orientation as they express their love, such as "You were the one" or "She is not just a friend." This becomes evidence that lesbians are taboo in the Korean drama industry. According to Park and Lee (2013), there are comparatively fewer references to lesbians compared to gays on television. They state that lesbians are often prejudiced that they choose to love women because they cannot date men due to hatred toward the opposite sex or mimic men to become one themselves. In this regard, lesbians are marginalized in media and more vulnerable to symbolic annihilation (Gerbner & Gross,

1976).

In addition, in *Reply 1994* (2013), the character Smiley cannot be clearly defined as bisexual as the author intentionally blurs the line between love and admiration. In the narrative, Smiley and Trash are in the same medical school, and Trash, with a more active personality and social skills, helps Smiley get adjusted to the new environment. During the procedure, Smiley's facial expression when Trash touches him and the background music when Smiley expresses his emotions make audience recognize that Smiley has special feelings for Trash. Moreover, he keeps calling Trash a 'senior' rather than 'hyung', which is a more common designation for a male to call an older male in Korea. He eventually wraps up his feelings by finally calling him 'hyung', with his monologue going, "I am now about to fill in the blank emptied for a long period and give an answer to the love full of confusion." Then, at the last minute, Smiley kisses a girl and marries her within two episodes. On that account, the way this drama illustrates bisexual love is not obvious as there lacks sufficient description of how and why Smiley suddenly gets attracted to a girl. It is ambiguous whether the answer Smiley acquired is that he confused love with admiration or that he chose the girl over Trash. Instead, it leaves room for the audience only to assume his sexual orientation.

Lastly, these dramas biasedly display only one particular group of transgender individuals. There are four transgender characters in the drama corpus, and they are all male-to-female (MTF) transgenders. In detail, Wan-jun in *Graceful Family* (2019), Hyun-yi in *Itaewon Class* (2020), grand prince Gyeseong in *Under the Queen's Umbrella* (2022), and Fish in *The Killer's Shopping List* (2022) are MTF transgender characters and they all unwantedly get caught dressing like females, which implies their

true identity. Among them, Hyun-yi is the only one who gets surgery later in the plot. Considering that there are different groups in transgender communities, including female-to-male (FTM) transgenders, it is clear that television dramas are yet to comprehensively embrace the community as a whole.

At this point, it is essential to question why queer characters' visibility is rising in recent television dramas, and why there are more gay-themed dramas compared to others. Previous Korean media studies provide reasons for these questions. To begin with, homosexuality has risen as a new topic of entertainment (H. Lee, 2009). While marriage, secret of birth, and status discrepancy are outdated obstacles in romantic narratives, homosexuals' forbidden love has opened a new chapter. Especially, heterosexual female audience becomes the major consumer of gay-themed content as gay romance and intimacy are favorably manipulated (J. Hong, 2008). To specify, gay love is stereotyped to be romance-oriented to the extreme, and gay intimacy help escape women's sufferings or obligations in a traditional gender role. They do not have to face any patriarchal male gaze or women objectified and subjugated as in heterosexual relationships. Also, they can enjoy the narratives without considering the real-life burdens of losing virginity, pregnancy, and marriage. Even before television dramas, yaoi comics and fan fictions with gay characters have been popular for the same reason (J. Kwon, 2019). Television drama is the continuum of such phenomenon, with change in the medium.

In this regard, the visibility of the LGBTQ+ both in exposure and diversity has comparatively increased, although there still exist limitations. The next step is to seek how the community is represented in the media, as a quantitative increase in disclosure

does not always mean justifiable representation without stereotypes (H. Lee & Ryu, 2018). When minority groups attain visibility, “the manner of that representation will itself reflect the biases and interests of those elites who define the public agenda” (L. Gross, 2020, p. 143).

3.2 REPRESENTATION

The second chapter of the analysis is 'Representation', and it examines in what way sexual minority characters are portrayed in the narratives. Before delving into the analysis, it is pivotal to comprehend what media is and why we should focus on its representation. According to Silvio Waisbord (2014), media is "not simply what people consume when not working or sleeping; they are interwoven in social life" (p. 8). Media itself is deeply embedded in our lives as a window wide open. It enables audience to view the society, and the society to view audience. He emphasizes "media sociology" to suggest media as a tool to interrogate how society operates and diverse societal dimensions as a standard to understand media context. Consequently, media and sociology are indispensable in interpreting each other.

Representation is not merely the process of reflection, but "the process of producing meanings through the creation of symbolic forms and content" (Orgad, 2014, p. 15). Media can either capture reality, embody the producer's intentions, or participate in constructing meaning (Hall et al., 2013). Within these procedures, the production of knowledge can entangle complex power dynamics (Foucault & Gordon, 2010). To apprehend the power these represented messages possess, media as a cultural production should be considered within the Circuit of Culture (Du Gay et al., 1997). The circuit contains five components, namely representation, identity, production, consumption, and regulation. They do not have a starting point but consistently influence each other. They all imply certain meanings and collaboratively reconstruct the whole creation of messages in media.

This is the point where Pierre Bourdieu (2011) reinforces the significant role of

capitals and fields in the course of cultural production. The agents, capitals, and fields constantly interplay and collide to shape the dynamics within cultural production. These capitals are divided into economic, cultural, and symbolic capitals, while the field of cultural production is placed within the wider framework of economic and political fields. The underlying symbolic power structure and message beyond the cultural production should be scrutinized in the broader scope to properly understand the media representation.

Furthermore, the influence of media is determined by the interaction between the agent and the field (Bourdieu, 2011). The process of reconciliation between the subjective and the objective, or the agent and the field, enables audience and society to mutually affect each other. The messages from each part of the Circuit of Culture add their power to the media and potentialize to render a massive impact on the agent. This includes the case in which media shapes and even changes the preconceived notions or knowledge of audience. Hence, it is crucial to analyze how specific individuals and communities are represented in media to seek what kind of perceptions, stereotypes, or power relations they are subjected to within society. This chapter contains a subchapter of '*Position*', which delves into how queer characters are positioned within the narrative.

c. Position

The positions of each queer character in the drama corpus can be divided into three aspects. The queer characters in the narratives are either (1) subject to discrimination,

(2) at the center of family issues, or (3) get involved in marriage without love. It is essential to investigate those positions as sexual orientation or identity become critical ‘weak points’ in these three cases. They are often threatened by others for their difference. For instance, their enemies use their weak points as means to bring them or their family down from a particular status or harm their reputation. To specify, in *Graceful Family* (2019), Wan-jun’s siblings talk about transgender movies in family meals on purpose to menace him. His brother even sends photos of him dressing as a woman to their parents just to become the next heir to the company. In *Itaewon Class* (2020), Hyun-yi’s sexual identity is maliciously exposed in the media to disturb her from winning the chef competition, and in *Under the Queen’s Umbrella* (2022), grand prince Gyeseong’s sexual identity is balefully used to make another prince the next king. Besides, there is also a case where the antagonist tries to negotiate using sexual orientation as a bargaining chip. In *Mine* (2021), the villain alarms Seo-hyun that he knows she is lesbian and states, “I think we have gotten pretty close now that we share pretty heavy secrets about each other ... In that sense, you and I have committed sins of the same degree. So, we should not try to bring each other down, should we?” Likewise, sexual orientation and identity become the vulnerable point to tether them from moving forward. Accordingly, this chapter will delve into how these weak points lead to discrimination, family issue, and broken marriage.

c.1 Discrimination

Firstly, sexual minority characters often face discrimination from strangers, family, or coworkers. They are misunderstood after stereotypes or lack of information and

excluded from society as people place them outside the set boundaries. To give an example, in *The Killer's Shopping List* (2022), a transgender character is primarily suspected as a murderer in a criminal case after the main protagonist found him dressing like a woman. His sexual identity is not the only reason for the suspicion but becomes the decisive cause to consider him peculiar and chase him after. This is not only the fictional story in the narrative, as transgender and gender nonconforming people are disproportionately ensnared in the criminal legal system (Mogul et al., 2011).

-Doctor: Have you ever kissed before? When did you first feel the urge to become a woman? The urge to wear makeup? When did you start getting aroused anytime you see a man?

-Han-kyul: I have never...

-Doctor: Gets aroused whenever he sees a man. (Speaks it out as he writes it down on the chart)

-Han-kyul: I am sorry. I think I will just come back later.

-Doctor: All you need is medication. I will give you three days' worth of prescriptions.

One notable point is that sexual majorities often consider queerness as something of choice, and thus, can be cured. Above is the dialogue in *The Coffee Prince* (2007) where Han-kyul goes to the psychiatrist and confesses that he has unknown feelings toward his male coworker. The doctor cannot even discern sexual orientation from sexual identity and considers that the symptoms can be cured after medication.

Similarly, in *Hometown Cha-Cha-Cha* (2021), Cho-hui's mother exclaims that Cho-hui's brother will lock her up in a mental institution for her sexuality and blames herself for raising her daughter wrong. This illustrates how her family views homosexuality as

a mental disease that is acquired while nurtured. Those are common misconceptions, as Judith Butler (2009) claims that it is a mistake to believe that “we might remake our gender or reconstruct our sexuality on the basis of deliberate decision” since desire and passion are not to be chosen (p. 12).

Moreover, queer characters are frequently demeaned as their sexual orientation or identity is considered an intended misconduct or even decadence that should be redeemed. In *Life is Beautiful* (2009), Kyung-soo’s mother meets her son’s partner and says, “Do you know what kind of family Kyung-soo is from? Such a thing cannot happen in this family. With such a normal body and face, how can he do such a filthy thing?” Then, she asks him to “Get away from my son immediately. Kyung-soo will soon remarry his ex-wife. Everything is already settled. He now tries to go against but at last, he will give up.” This implies that she believes homosexuality only happens to abnormal people and can be fixed if the relationship ends. Religion is also linked to age-old stereotypes about homosexuality. The pastor in *The Empire* (2022) preaches, “There is no such thing as inborn homosexuality ... Even if somebody sinned worth stoning to death like homosexuality, if he or she repents and gets back into His arms, it is the road to life as a Christian to embrace that person with love, regardless of whether they are a prodigal, murderer, or homosexual.” Again, the pastor assumes that homosexuality is a sin that should be repented.

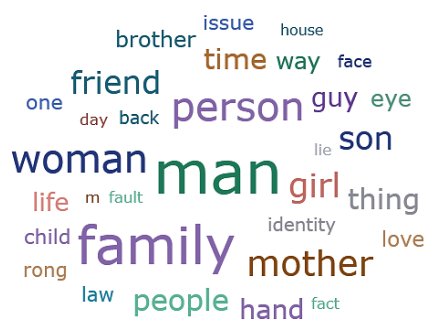
Discrimination also exists when sexual minority characters are isolated from the community. “But to be honest, I feel a little bit uncomfortable. If it is someone irrelevant to me, it would not matter. But if someone near me is a homosexual, I want to look away,” spits Ha-jae in *Schoolgirl Detectives* (2014-2015). This line explicitly

depicts the logic of how sexual minorities are excluded from the personal sphere of acceptance. The same reasoning can be found in *Be Melodramatic* (2019) when a gay couple is kicked out of the restaurant because of their sexuality, and in *My Unfamiliar Family* (2020) when a friend recommends Eun-joo not to work in a specific company because one of the owners is a gay wearing flower-patterned suit. Hyun-yi, the transgender character in *Itaewon Class* (2020) even feels the burden to leave the workplace. One coworker asks the boss why he hired Hyun-yi even though he knew Hyun-yi's sexual identity, and another one claims, "And what if people find out that he is transgender? It will make some people make uncomfortable ... I know you feel sorry to do this, but you must decide." In this regard, they demonstrate how queer characters stand outside the clear division between us and them. It is similar to how the majority constructs the boundary of able-bodied heterosexuality and alienates others for their severe disability or critical queerness (McRuer, 2006).

c.2 Family Issue

Secondly, queer characters often have family issues as they become the cause of relationship destruction, mostly with their parents. The family either stays apart, denies the truth, or blames them for disgracing the family. <Figure 4> and <Figure 5> are extracted from ATLAS.ti, which respectively display the measurements of the concept types and word frequencies in the drama transcript. Based on these figures, 'Family' and 'Mother' are the second and the fifth most used concepts with 'Man', 'Woman', and 'Person' in between. Furthermore, 'Mother' is the most frequently used word in the drama transcripts. Hence, it can be deduced that family relationship, especially with

mother, is crucial in dealing with sexual orientation and identity. This is comprehensible as family acceptance and rejection are critical in the mental and physical health standards of sexual minorities (Chrisler, 2017; Ryan et al., 2009, 2010).



<Figure 4. ATLAS.ti Concepts Cloud> <Figure 5. ATLAS.ti Word Frequency Cloud>

-Fish: I originally did not plan to let my parents know, but after my surgery, they will eventually know it, so I came out of the closet. But they kept me in a prayer center, shaved my hair and locked me home, and tried to send me to the psychiatric hospital. That is why I ran away from home three times. I approximately calculated the amount of money for what I worked in their restaurant and the part-time payment and took them with me.

-Friend: So, your parents reported you to the police to bring you back home.

-Fish: No, to break my habit.

Above is the dialogue from *The Killer's Shopping List* (2022) when Fish, a transgender character, explains the story of his criminal record. In the narratives of drama corpus, parents with LGBTQ+ children often actively refuse to embrace them and show aggressive behaviors. For instance, Kyung-soo, in *Life is Beautiful* (2010), lives apart from his family and he mentions, "My family treats me as a monster, but I

am still bold at home. Nobody faces me, but all by myself ... If the stone irrelevant people throw is the size of a fist, my family shoots a millstone. They call me a monster, lock the door, push me out, or get carried by ambulance after taking pills.”

Even if parents do not severely reprimand their sons or daughters, it is common that they simply decide not to live together. In *Cheese in the Trap* (2016), Joo-yong says, “I got kicked out by my family because of my relationship,” and in *Be Melodramatic* (2019), Hyo-bong blames himself by stating, “My family was happy until I confessed about myself ... Eun-jeong (his sister) lost her parents because of me.”

Whereas some families are torn apart, some families decide to remain but turn their eyes away from the truth. It is the avoidance strategy to refuse to acknowledge the fact either cognitively or behaviorally (Chrisler, 2017; Zeidner & Endler, 1996). In *My Unfamiliar Family* (2020), Dr. Yoon’s mother knows that his son has chronic depression for repressing his sexual orientation and deceiving his wife. However, all she does is ask him to take antidepressants, and even at the moment of divorce, what she is concerned about is not her son but whether her daughter-in-law will keep the reason for the divorce a secret. Wan-jun’s mother in *Graceful Family* (2019) also appeals that she knew that her son is transgender as Wan-jun used her makeup tools and hid her clothes and heels as a child. Still, she decides to ignore it as she laments, “I was also afraid. I did not want to admit that you, my future and my everything, are different from others. I turned my eyes on purpose. I hoped that it was not the truth.”

Such reactions result from the fact that Korean heterosexual individuals, especially parents, often do not believe in the existence of sexual minorities, misunderstand them as sexually promiscuous, consider they do not yet properly comprehend themselves, and

render them invisible (E. Lee, 2021). In fact, negative reactions including shame, loss, anger, and guilt are the most frequent responses of parents (Bucher, 2014; Goodrich, 2009; Herdt & Koff, 2000; Saltzburg, 2004). It is mostly because they consider their sons' or daughters' different sexuality as their future obstacles or challenges (Chrisler, 2017).

c.3 Broken Marriage

Lastly, queer characters form loveless relationships to conceal their difference from the world, live a normal life, or leave their parents. For instance, O-je in *At Eighteen* (2019) dates his female classmate to veil his feelings toward a male friend. But mostly in the drama corpus, the relationship does not simply end with dating, but with marriage that often leads to divorce. Three dramas, *Life is Beautiful* (2010), *Graceful Family* (2019), and *My Unfamiliar Family* (2020), all contain broken marriages, and only one couple from *Mine* (2021) decides not to divorce. It is not because of love, but because the husband does not want himself and his lesbian wife to be humiliated by others. Likewise, marriage is implemented in narratives as a device to conceal sexual orientation or identity (Joo, 2003). They often conclude in dissolution to indirectly advocate the existing familial system in society as well as heteronormativity.

Especially, there is a striking difference between *Mine* (2021) and *My Unfamiliar Family* (2020) in how they focus on marriage on two opposite sides. To specify, the former depicts marriage from the side of the homosexual spouse and the latter describes marriage from the side of the heterosexual spouse. Seo-hyun, a lesbian character in *Mine* (2021) breaks up with her partner and longs for her for years, as she goes through

an arranged marriage. The plot mostly spotlights her agony of missing her star-crossed lover and her effort to bear her decadent alcoholic husband. On the other hand, *My Unfamiliar Family* (2020) continues the story from the heterosexual partner's perspective. Eun-joo marries her husband without knowing his sexual orientation and tries test tubes for a baby to form a normal family. Later, she discovers his sexuality by witnessing his messenger chat and his affair with a man he met there. She laments that her marriage is a "Mistake, bad lies, and a fraud." The plot is pinpointed on the distress a heterosexual spouse suffers. Hence, these two dramas each elucidate how the loveless union of homosexual and heterosexual individuals leads to the destruction of both spouses.

All these three aspects of position illustrate how the current society is to the LGBTQ+ community. These are not merely fictional cases as there are similar incidents in Korean society. For instance, Poongja, an MTF transgender, once spoke on a television program that she and her father severed their relations for over a decade. Since he considered her to have a mental illness, he lifted a knife and said, "Kill me if you want to live as a woman" (W. Lee, 2022). That being the case, the prospect can be found in the representations that the dramas implement queer narratives not to exclude them from society but to unveil the positions they are in.

3.3 DISCLOSURE

The third chapter of the analysis is 'Disclosure', and it investigates the depiction of the moments of coming out. The disclosure of sexual orientation or identity, or coming out, is both a personal and social process that is "omnipresent as long as we operate within a heteronormative society" (Guittar, 2013, p. 175). The phrase 'coming out' did not originally come from the LGBTQ+ community. It was adopted and acknowledged in the mid-1960s with the metaphor of 'coming out of the closet' (Sandler, 2022; Scott, 2018). It refers to a process in which individuals with alternative sexual orientation or identity "explore, define, and disclose" themselves "in a way straight individuals need not" (Hill, 2009, p. 346). Whereas coming out is merely counted as a liberatory act to gain visibility, it is a more complex movement as opening up in public also entails vulnerability and risk of discrimination (Gould, 2009). It can also be performed as a political act to confront social oppression and establish a form of solidarity. History can go upstream from Harvey Milk coming out to demand equal rights to Sonja Mackenzie creating a new form of intimacy in the black AIDS epidemic (Mackenzie, 2013).

Moreover, the reactions to disclosure should be considered as there are various studies on how the responses of others after coming out influence the relationship and growth of sexual minorities (Baiocco et al., 2016; Mayeza, 2021; Solomon et al., 2015). The coming out process often leads to stigma, resulting from familial or social opposition (Herek, 2007). It is not a personal attribute but a function of relationships, as stigma occurs when minorities are denigrated, discredited, and constructed as invalid by others (LaSala, 2010). In this regard, by focusing on the coming out process using the three-lens typology of coming out 'in', 'to', and 'as' as well as the counterpart's

reaction, power relations and stereotypes of the community can be exposed (Sandler, 2022). The subchapter of ‘*Coming Out*’ examines the disclosures and responses to each drama.

d. Coming Out

There are 17 coming out narratives depicted in the drama corpus. They include cases where heterosexual characters are misunderstood by others or intentionally deceive others as sexual minorities. <Figure 6> illustrates how many coming out processes there are, whether they are voluntary disclosures or unwanted outings, and reactions to them. Among the 17 cases, there are ten voluntary disclosures and nine outings, with two dramas containing both. The number of coming out narratives gradually increases throughout the timeline. As for the reactions, two are positive, six are negative, seven are neutral, and the remaining two dramas include both positive and negative responses. It is labeled neutral when there is either no reaction or an ambiguous reaction that does not have any positive or negative connotation.

| | NAME | C/O | VOLUN | OUTING | REACTION |
|---|-----------------------|-----|-------|--------|----------|
| 1 | Coffee Prince | x | — | — | — |
| 2 | You're Beautiful | x | — | — | — |
| 3 | Life is Beautiful | o | o | — | Both |
| 4 | Sungkyunkwan Scandal | x | — | — | — |
| 5 | Personal Taste | o | — | o | Neutral |
| 6 | Reply 1994 | x | — | — | — |
| 7 | Schoolgirl Detectives | o | — | o | Negative |
| 8 | Love in the Moonlight | x | — | — | — |

| | | | | | |
|----|----------------------------|---|---|---|----------|
| 9 | Cheese in the Trap | x | — | — | — |
| 10 | Strong Girl Bong-soon | o | — | o | Neutral |
| 11 | Prison Playbook | o | o | — | Neutral |
| 12 | Graceful Family | o | — | o | Negative |
| 13 | Be Melodramatic | o | — | o | Neutral |
| 14 | At Eighteen | o | o | o | Negative |
| 15 | Itaewon Class | o | o | o | Negative |
| 16 | My Unfamiliar Family | o | o | — | Negative |
| 17 | Sweet Munchies | o | o | — | Neutral |
| 18 | Vincenzo | o | — | o | Neutral |
| 19 | Mine | o | o | — | Positive |
| 20 | The King's Affection | x | — | — | — |
| 21 | Hometown Cha-Cha-Cha | o | o | — | Positive |
| 22 | Under the Queen's Umbrella | o | — | o | Both |
| 23 | The Killer's Shopping List | x | — | — | — |
| 24 | Extraordinary Attorney Woo | o | o | — | Neutral |
| 25 | The Empire | o | o | — | Negative |

<Figure 6. Coming Out in Drama Corpus>

d.1 Unwanted Outing

According to the figure above, the number of unwanted outings is almost equal to the number of voluntary disclosures. Then, what are the reasons for others to expose an individual's sexual orientation or identity? Within the drama corpus, they can be deduced into four, which are (1) for personal benefit, (2) for explanation, (3) for entertainment, and (4) for accusation. The first three cases are outings 'for personal advantage' in *Graceful Family* (2019), *Itaewon Class* (2020), and *Under the Queen's Umbrella* (2022). As mentioned in the 'Representation' chapter, the queer characters' sexual orientation or identity is considered a critical weak point, and therefore, they are maliciously outed by their rivals to deprive them of their status.

Secondly, there are four cases, which occupy half among nine, where other characters out the queer characters 'to explain' the situation. Considering the trait of the drama in which someone should provide background information to audience, outings in narrative can be seen as inevitable for the natural content development and character explanation. Nonetheless, why it must be an outing and how it is depicted are different stories. In these four dramas, heterosexual characters just deliver the fact without implying any positive or negative connotations. For instance, So-min's manager in *Be Melodramatic* (2019) explains that Hyo-bong and the director are dating as So-min thinks these two men are both interested in her. In *Personal Taste* (2010), Gae-in exposes that Jin-ho is gay to justify why they are living together and to escape him from trouble. Moreover, Bong-soon in *Strong Girl Bong-soon* (2017) tells her mother about her boss's orientation not to let her mother expect any romance, and Cha-young in *Vincenzo* (2021) treats Min-seong's sexual orientation as one of her target's traits to devise a scheme. It may even seem affirmative as homosexuality is naturally mentioned without any stereotype. Still, it is essential to keep in mind that they outed queer characters without any consent.

As for the last two dramas of unwanted outings, one exposes 'for entertainment', and the other discloses 'for accusation'. When a classmate overhears O-je confessing his orientation to his girlfriend behind the curtain in *At Eighteen* (2019), she spreads the news in the group chat for fun, which begins with "Can I tell you something that will creep you out?" There even is information about whom O-je actually has feelings for, and that person also comes to know from the text. Furthermore, the leader of a secret club in *Schoolgirl Detectives* (2014-2015) sneakily takes photos of Soo-yeon kissing her partner, posts them in school, and announces that she "Who enjoys irreverent

homosexuality again gave up being a student and should leave the school.” The leader even calls her an insect and a cluster of problems. After the outing, her classmates ostracize her by speaking badly of her and even throwing food at her. She eventually leaves the school and breaks up with her lover. These cases, though there are only a few narratives, explicitly reveal the tragic outcomes of unwanted outings.

d.2 Reaction to Disclosure

The next point to discuss is the reaction of others at the moment of coming out, either voluntary or forced. There are (1) seven dramas with neutral reactions, (2) two dramas with positive reactions, (3) six dramas with negative reactions, and (4) the last two dramas with both positive and negative reactions. Firstly, the ‘neutral reaction’ is the most common out of 17 cases. To specify, *Personal Taste* (2010), *Strong Girl Bong-soon* (2017), and *Sweet Munchies* (2020) are actually about heterosexual men mistaken or pretending to be gay. Hence, coming out narratives in these dramas are not taken seriously. *Be Melodramatic* (2019), *Vincenzo* (2021), and *Extraordinary Attorney Woo* (2022) also contain sexuality disclosures, but they are only a part of a couple of episodes, and thus, not dealt with in detail. In *Prison Playbook* (2017-2018), Herong comes out of the closet in front of two friends and they do not give any related responses. There goes an orchestra music and silence at the beginning, and then they continue an awkward conversation not to show that they are stunned. One notable fact is that the four outing cases ‘for explanation’ mentioned above are all included in this category. Since the characters reveal queer characters’ sexual orientation or identity to provide information, others show rather neutral or no reactions.

-Wan-jun: Father, what kind of son was I to you?

-Father: What?

-Wan-jun: I should have ridden a horse like a professional horseman because you wanted. I hate horses. I should have swum like a professional swimmer because you wanted. I am afraid of water. Because you wanted, I ranked first in school every year. Why? Because you were happy. I liked you and mom being happy. But Father, have you ever asked me what I want? ... Yes, I am transgender. It was when I was about fourteen. Do you know how I was when I first noticed my sexual identity? I was afraid. The fear and horror that you may kill me if you find out. That was why I should have been the perfect son and get noticed by you ... Can you just accept me the way I am?

-Father: Get out of here immediately.

-Kang-baek: Because I was with my boyfriend that night ... Me being silent does not change the fact that I am gay. If it is that simple, that easy, I would have been already. Because I was so desperate for that. I was just so desperate to be like others. But I could not change. Though I tried so hard.

-Grandfather: You did not try enough. I will contact the pastor in charge of the homosexuality therapy ... It is not you to decide it.

-Kang-baek: Was there anything that I can decide?

-Grandfather: Homosexuality ruined this kid.

Secondly, six dramas contain ‘negative reactions’. Above are the two dialogues from *Graceful Family* (2019) and *The Empire* (2022). They both contain narratives of being rejected by the family directly after coming out. As family values, reputation, and religion substantially influence Korean families, these dramas realistically depict how it

is to disclose themselves to family, especially parents. These narratives also shed light on the challenges that sexual minority children should endure from a young age and continue to face as they mature. In fact, there are findings on how patriarchal authoritarianism, restrictive gender-role attitudes, strict cultural values, and conservative religiosity affect the level of homophobia (Herek, 1988; Y. Seo et al., 2006).

Consequently, traditional or religious Korean families have a higher possibility to exhibit unsupportive reactions to disclosure. *My Unfamiliar Family* (2020) also contains a negative reaction from the wife, but this can be counted as an exception as Dr. Yoon concealed his orientation and married her.

Apart from family, the other three dramas *Schoolgirl Detectives* (2014-2015), *Itaewon Class* (2020), and *At Eighteen* (2019) cover negative reactions from the public. For instance, when Hyun-yi got outed as transgender, other people mutter, “If the chef is transgender, does it mean the chef had the surgery on that part? Did she get plastic surgery on her face too?”, “That is gross. I had no idea. No wonder her voice was...”, and even ask her to leave the ladies’ room.

-Mother: Whatever your intentions are, thank you for telling me first. Let’s do something about it. I will speak with your dad ... I was just so surprised and said something ignorant, but I know that it is not just a hobby. I am sorry, Tae-seop. I am sorry to be surprised. I am not telling you a lie. I just could not stay calm.

-Father: I am sorry. I wish I should have talked with you about your thoughts. I had no idea that you have been bearing with it all this time. I regret it. Look at me. Look me in the eyes. Chin up ... You do not have anything to harm others. You are still my son and our child. There is nothing to be different. So do not shrink yourself up. At least I and your mother fully support you.

-Aunt: Many people love the same sex more than the opposite sex. They are just hiding it. They are all sons and daughters of someone. It is just that this happened to our family ... That is not a disease nor a choice. If it is a matter of choice, why would have he made that choice? With that nonsensical prejudice and not being accepted as a society member?

On the other hand, the two dramas *Life is Beautiful* (2010) and *Under the Queen's Umbrella* (2022) 'both have positive and negative responses' after coming out, as parents admit their children, but others reject them. Here, positive reactions will be focused on as these dramas with 12 years of time difference exhibit unusual affirmative consequences. Above displays three responses of family members in *Life is Beautiful* (2010). This drama is especially remarkable, as feature drama that puts considerable importance on the LGBTQ+ narrative is few and far between. When it was aired, there were newspaper advertisements of communities protesting against the drama that somebody's son became gay after watching the drama, and SBS, the broadcasting company, should be responsible when he dies of AIDS (Doo, 2010). Considering such opposition, it is acknowledgeable that the drama attempted to cover the narrative of parents embracing their son after coming out.

Under the Queen's Umbrella (2022) also became a milestone in historical drama as the concept of transgender was newly introduced in the setting of the Chosun dynasty and the mother even accepts her son. Below is from separate discourses with her servant and her son. Taking the era into account, she cannot actively support her son to live as a woman but admits her son as a daughter and gives a female version portrait as a present to help relieve the lifelong sorrow.

-Mother: (to her servant) I thought about how it must have been for him when it is too much to ignore and he had to accept it. How lonely and terrified he must have felt. I simply could not look the other way. After all, I am his mom.

-Mother: (to her son) When I first found out about it, I did not know how to react. But angry? I was never angry. No matter how you look, you are still my child. This is my most treasured hairpin. It used to belong to my mother. I wanted to give it to my daughter if I had one. It is yours now ... There will come a day when those forced to hold something different within their hearts find their freedom and will never have to hide.

(A silhouette of mother and son changes to a drawing of mother and daughter)

The last two dramas with ‘positive reactions’ are *Mine* (2021) and *Hometown Cha-Cha-Cha* (2021). As the husband’s chaotic personal life can fully become a cause of divorce, when Seo-hyun comes out and says she has been loyal to the relationship, he briefly comments, “Then you are better than me.” Moreover, when Cho-hui opens her feelings to Hwa-jeong who is also a woman, Hwa-jeong turns her down but confesses that she already knew it and embraces Cho-hui as who she is. Though there have been significant improvements in depicting coming out narratives, there still are only a limited number of positive responses. The next question to ask is why there are more neutral or negative demonstrations in the dramas, which will be answered in the next chapter.

3.4 FRAMING

The fourth chapter of the analysis is 'Framing', and it dissects how the characters and narratives are aligned with the dominant system. Framing refers to "the way events and issues are organized and made sense of, especially by media, media professionals, and their audiences" (Reese et al., 2001, p. 1). According to Todd Gitlin (2003), media uses diverse verbal or visual means to present, emphasize, and even exclude certain parts of reality to construct a frame. Framing often involves the process of selection and salience of a particular culture or information (Entman, 1993). The frame forms a window to connect media and society. It seems to reflect reality as it is, but in fact, crops and exaggerates specific aspects to fit into the existing custom and societal norms.

The LGBTQ+ community often becomes the subject of framing. From a broad perspective, the narratives are reduced to suit heteronormativity and patriarchy (J. Hong, 2008). From a narrow perspective, the characters in the narratives are distorted to gear toward given stereotypes (J. S. Kim & Min, 2012; H. Lee, 2009). While the level of visibility and representation of the community is mounting, framing remains as vestiges in the corner. They do not mean the true enhancement of sexual minority rights if these frameworks maintain to prolong. That is to say, the procedure of framing conveys and even reproduces stereotypes of the minority community.

According to Walter Lippman (2004), stereotype is "the subtlest and the most pervasive of all influences" and shapes the world not only in the form of art or text but also in the form of moral codes and political agitations (p. 60). It is a lens readily provided by the culture under ignorance. Ellen Seiter (1986) reinforces this perspective that media stereotypes are systematic representations that justify power relationships. It

insidiously permeates society, empowers the dominant group, and deprives the subordinate group. In the media ecology where media, audience, and society constantly influence each other, their interaction forms a cycle and constructs the power dynamics (Lum, 2014; Postman, 2000). Within the cycle, there flow institutions, interests, traditions, and most importantly, stereotypes. Thus, we should take a cautious and sensible approach in stepping into power relations and inspect the application of stereotypes in media. This chapter is divided into ‘*Heteronormativity*’ and ‘*Characteristics*’ subchapters. They will investigate how queer characters are framed under heteronormativity and stereotyped characteristics.

e. Heteronormativity

Heteronormativity is the hegemonic system that renders “heterosexuality as natural and superior to all other expressions of sexuality” (Robinson, 2016, p. 1). It justifies the discrimination and homophobic behaviors of the majority community by designating sexual minorities as the marginals (Warner, 1991). In the Korean media industry, such heteronormative norms become a critical barrier to producing LGBTQ+ content. Despite the gradual increase in exposure and diversity, the drama industry remains to allow only the narratives that do not counter the major stream of heteronormativity. On that account, particular characteristics of the community are cropped to fit into the frame. Often queer sexuality is exaggerated, homosexual romance is selectively spotlighted, and discourse about minority marginalization is amputated (J. S. Kim & Min, 2012; Park & Lee, 2013). By compressing the minority characters through the mold called heteronormativity, the dramas conceal the threat they may trigger, and

consequently, the narratives become the evidence to support the given norms. In the end, the dramas are successful not only in conforming them to the existing standards, but also in attracting audience with original themes and relaxing the majority crowd.

e.1 Pseudo-homosexuality

There is a unique type of narrative in Korean media related to the LGBTQ+ community. The industry has discovered the most favorable scheme of ‘pseudo-homosexuality’ to kill two birds with one stone. The narrative feigns homosexual romance which ultimately turns out to be heterosexual. In detail, female characters pretend to be men for inevitable reasons, such as family livelihood, and male characters come to believe that they are men. They gradually fall in love with the female characters not knowing that they are women and agonize over their sexual orientation. Eventually, they find out the truth and resolve their concerns. Starting with *Coffee Prince* (2007), which was a huge hit with a viewing rate of 27.8% (Y. Kim, 2007), other dramas including *You’re Beautiful* (2009), *Sungkyunkwan Scandal* (2010), *Love in the Moonlight* (2016), and *The King’s Affection* (2021) continued reproducing similar narratives and solidified pseudo-homosexuality as a cliché which guarantees success (Park & Lee, 2013). Such a trend can also be construed based on the culture industry, in which media as cultural production is motivated only by economic domination. The media industry is no longer an art, but an entertainment business grounded in capitalism, as profitable narratives are mechanically reproduced, given the complete pattern and prepared interpretation (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2020).

To specify, there are several striking traits to be found in the pseudo-homosexuality

narratives. To start with, male characters deny their love in different ways to refuse to identify themselves as gay. They mostly express their anxiety and anger towards female characters feigning as men. For instance, in *You're Beautiful* (2009), Jeremy shouts, "I am a man too! I only like pretty women. Women with pretty faces and bodies. All men do. It is normal. Do you think I will like a guy like you?" at the female character. Also, in *Coffee Prince* (2007), Han-kyul perplexes his orientation by uttering, "I cannot do anything lately because of you. So let me hug you just once. I think that will make everything clear," and then cries, "I do not like you anymore. So do not even bother me again." Despite their confusion, audience knows that these male characters are straight and that they can even discover love regardless of the disguise. Accordingly, the anxiety and anger they express do not disturb, but rather stimulate audience.

These male characters, in the end, give in to their emotions and confess their love. Seon-jun in *Sungkyunkwan Scandal* (2010) states, "I like you Yoon-sik. I who do not head except for the right path, do not act except for the right rule, think the etiquette and law are everything of this world like you who is a man. That is the reason I cannot keep you near me as a friend or a colleague," and Han-kyul in *Coffee Prince* (2007) also confides, "Just once. I am going to tell you this just once so listen closely. I love you. Whether you are a guy or an alien, I do not care anymore." These are the moments when the male characters surrender their masculinity and conviction for love. Though this does not last for long as they soon find out that they are women, such a romance-oriented narrative is enough to attract female audience in particular to fulfill their desires (J. Hong, 2008).

e.2 Compare and Contrast

Yet, this cliché of pseudo-homosexuality has shown some changes recently. *The King's Affection* (2021) was produced after a gap of five years since *Love in the Moonlight* (2016). The basic narrative is the same, as Ji-woon, the male protagonist, falls for the prince who is a female taking the role of her brother. Not knowing the fact, he represses his feelings by saying, "What could come of liking a man, a crown prince with a wedding underway? Get a grip on yourself," and confesses his feelings by stating, "I thought it was my loyalty to you. Instead, it was my affection." Nevertheless, there is a difference in that the drama mostly attributes the cause of suffering to the discrepancy in status and family relationship, while diluting his agony over homosexuality. The emotion Ji-woon possesses is closer to admiration and yearning than anger and anxiety. Even when he finds out about her identity, he shows a deep understanding. Furthermore, whereas previous pseudo-homosexuality dramas had illustrated female characters as poor, distressed, and in need of help from male characters of higher status, this time the female character is in a higher position as she is a crown prince and the male character is a servant. Rather than waiting for him to help, she should overcome the adversity herself as she later sits on the throne as a king. The plot is not solely centered on romance but also her struggle against her destiny. Likewise, while still implementing the pseudo-homosexuality narrative, the drama attempts to scatter the boundaries of romance-oriented cliché and gender roles.

Besides, lesbian themes are difficult to find even in pseudo-homosexuality scenarios as no men are pretending to be women in the drama corpus. The reasons can be conversely assumed that lesbian-themed gender disguise dramas fail to attract female

as well as male audience and do not conform to patriarchal heteronormativity. They can damage male masculinity and reinforce women's traditional gender roles, which may elicit a sense of discomfort among both audiences. In fact, in *The Tale of Nokdu* (2019), the male protagonist disguises as female but the female protagonist soon catches that out. It is a similar cliché but only without the homosexual theme. Here, it can be understood that heteronormativity in Korea is supported by patriarchal norms and homosexual dramas are produced by and for the majority audience.

Apart from pseudo-homosexuality, *Personal Taste* (2010) and *Sweet Munchies* (2020) are 'sexuality deception' dramas where male characters pretend to be gay and female characters suffer from unobtainable love. Again, homosexuality is used as a major barrier but in a different direction. In this narrative, female characters begin as friends and even live together recognizing male characters as gay, but their feelings come to change. An interesting fact is, there appears another genuine gay character that falls for them in both dramas. Their love remains unrequited as it is out of misunderstanding and does not get the chance to take away the spotlight from the heterosexual love with the female protagonist. It is the ideal scheme to attract female audience with gay themes, yet to reinforce the existing norms simultaneously.

Thus, in these two types of narratives with gay themes, homosexuality is utilized as a temporary obstacle that is readily set up to be resolved. It is not even an unexpected twist as audience can predict the conclusion from the beginning. Still, they give a novel impulse apart from the stale barriers of love and function to intensify heterosexual romance. Over time, some drastic expressions toward different sexual orientations diminished such as when characters ponder their sexuality. Nonetheless, the essence that

these narratives are employed for the entertainment of the majority, especially female audience, and ultimately advocate heteronormativity is open for controversy.

f. Characteristics

Television dramas can also construct a frame through stereotyped characteristics, especially with particular behaviors and appearances. They contribute to misrepresenting the LGBTQ+ community by assigning erroneous stereotypes, which often leads to justifying power relationships (Gerbner & Gross, 1976; Seiter, 1986). It is pivotal to view media's misrepresentation as those frames shape or reproduce stereotypes outside the screen. As there are fewer possibilities to face sexual minorities in conservative Korean society, and therefore, fewer firsthand opportunities for cultivating images, the majority community comes to passively perceive them through media (L. Gross, 2020; H. Lee & Ryu, 2018). Along with the representation comes stereotypes which help construct certain impressions of the unfamiliar community and make judgments (Coleman, 2010). Since television dramas are mainly produced by sexual majorities, they tend to project images based on common stereotypes. The images may be positive but contain the ideal characteristics that the majority can appreciate. Or else, the images can comprise objects of disgust such as AIDS and feces (Nussbaum, 2010).

f.1 Gendered Homosexuality Frame

The most representative characteristic when depicting sexual minorities is the

“gendered homosexuality frame” (J. S. Kim & Min, 2012). Media divides same-sex couples as male and female by endowing them with traditional gender roles, which are also referred to as top and bottom. In this way, the majority can still consume homosexual narratives by minimizing any visual or emotional repulsion and maintaining similarities with heterosexual romance. The masculine side is mostly in higher status, handsome, and privileged. On the contrary, the feminine side is fragile, pretty, and needs protection. Some are even displayed as extraordinarily erotic and sexy.

As for gay characters, there are studies about how they comply with the gendered homosexuality frame. Often in yaoi comics, fan fictions, and commercial movies, top and bottom, or masculine and feminine roles are fixed both in appearance and behavior (J. Hong, 2008). For instance, in the movies *The King and the Clown* (2005) and *Antique* (2008), the feminine sides have long hair and beautiful face with maximized sexual charm.

Nonetheless, for the gay couples in the drama corpus, it is complicated to spot the gendered homosexuality frame except for the pseudo-homosexuality dramas where female characters pretend to be males. The gay couples in *Life is Beautiful* (2010), *Prison Playbook* (2017-2018), *Be Melodramatic* (2019), and *The Empire* (2022) do not show conspicuous gender traits. As for appearance, there is no clear division, and as for behavior, there may be some feminine or masculine features but not enough to draw a line in between. For example, in *Be Melodramatic* (2019), Hyo-bong mostly hangs out with his sister’s friends, but it is ambiguous to call it feminine because they are living in his sister’s house. *Cheese in the Trap* (2016) is an exception, as Joo-yong does not seem feminine externally, yet is expressive and sentimental as well as calling everyone

“babe”.

-Brother: Gosh, your boss looks so handsome.

-Mother: No need to mention that. He looks immaculate as Choon-sim’s finished food bowl.

-Brother: It is a relief that he is gay. If not, his relationships with women would be quite promiscuous.

Instead, it is quite common that gay characters are depicted as attractive, other than being feminine and pretty. They are said to be pitied for their sexual orientation despite their handsome face. Above is the discourse from *Strong Girl Bong-soon* (2017).

Although the boss is actually straight, the family misunderstands him as gay and speaks of how his appearance is a waste. Furthermore, in *Be Melodramatic* (2019), a female character describes the gay couple as “funny, sweet, and handsome” and that she likes them both. Kyung-soo in *Life is Beautiful* (2010) is also popular with women as one of them tries to ask him out. Likewise, gay characters are mostly illustrated as nice looking and the reason is either one of three: to give the role of femininity, to conceal essential problems with flamboyant appearance, or provide visual pleasure to the majority audience (H. Lee, 2009). The commonality is that these frames distract audience from noticing minority marginalization and implant stereotypes.

Not as couples, but as individuals, gay characters in *Vincenzo* (2021) and *Strong Girl Bong-soon* (2017) express feminine behavior as well as high sexual desire. Since male femininity is generally considered a “ritual function in male homosocial cultures,” these characters project the prejudice that gay individuals will be feminine (Halberstam,

2018, p. 940). When Vincenzo asks Min-seong, a gay character in *Vincenzo* (2021), whether he can ride his horse, Min-seong replies, “Sure. Be as rough as you want,” with a leer look. He speaks in a high tone and chortles in delight like a little girl in an exaggerated manner. In the amusement park, he puts his hands around Vincenzo’s chest to enjoy the touch and hugs him around his waist as in <Figure 7>. Likewise, the character is highly stereotypical in that he is portrayed as girlish yet obscene.



<Figure 7. *Vincenzo* Character> (Story J Company, 2021)

<Figure 8. *Strong Girl Bong-soon* Character> (JTBC, 2017)

The gay character named Odolbbyo in *Strong Girl Bong-soon* (2017) can be said to be the collection and maximization of all gay bias. Like what can be seen in <Figure 8>, he wears lots of jewelry, choker, and red or pink shirts with wide openings alongside the weird makeup stressed on his red lips. He applies manicures in his office, has a high-pitched voice with nasal sound, blinks his eyes fast with long eyelashes, and uses a

lot of hand gestures. Moreover, he shows hysterical behavior towards Bong-soon, who is female, such as trying to hit her and ordering coffee, out of jealousy. Most importantly, he is drawn to be fond of physical contact with men as he pulls the male coworker's collar and cries in his chest. The compilation of his lines below explains how the drama misrepresents him for amusement and mockery.

-Odolbbyo: Are you that pretty? ... I am the crazy bitch in this area ... Why are you keep flirting? ... You got your nose fixed? The boss does not like gals like you ... Sweet, sweet, sweet! Brew me a coffee as sweet as me ... You drink it first. You spat on this, right? ... Why would he give flowers to you when he is not even your boyfriend? Are you easy with men?

Conversely, the gendered homosexuality frame is prominent in lesbian couples. In the first lesbian-themed drama in the corpus, which is *Schoolgirl Detectives* (2014-2015), the external appearances of the two female characters are similar, but while Sooyeon is active and determined, her partner is comparatively shy and introverted. Sooyeon sacrifices herself and gets expelled from school to protect her partner. In the other three dramas with lesbian couples, *Mine* (2021), *Hometown Cha-Cha-Cha* (2021), and *Extraordinary Attorney Woo* (2022), there is a striking division in appearance than in personality. As shown in <Figure 9, 10, 11>, one partner is short-haired and wears pants, whereas the other partner has long hair with feminine clothing. Accordingly, there are obvious characteristics allowing audience to estimate which gender frame is given.



<Figure 9. *Extraordinary Attorney Woo* Character> (ENA, 2022)

<Figure 10. *Hometown Cha-Cha-Cha* Character> (tvN, 2021a)

<Figure 11. *Mine* Character> (tvN, 2021b)

f.2 Unidimensional Frame

As for transgender characters, no romantic relationship is exposed, and therefore, it is difficult to trace whether there is a certain gender frame. Even apart from the romantic relationship, there are no explicit gender stereotypes represented in these characters. Furthermore, since there are only MTF transgenders appearing in the drama corpus, there is a limitation in analyzing diverse transgender frames. In other media, such as documentaries, transgenders tend to be demonstrated as flashy and rather feminine to gather attention than to be focused on their suffering in society as sexual minorities (J. Hong, 2008). However, in four dramas with transgender themes in the corpus, transgender individuals are portrayed

more in a neutral direction. It can be interpreted that as transgender characters have only recently begun to emerge, which is in 2019, the dramas attempt to be more cautious and not to touch any sensitive boundaries.

Howbeit, there still are conspicuous characteristics that they are mostly secretive, prudent, and taciturn. While gay and lesbian characters are illustrated in multidimensional perspectives and have diverse personalities despite their secrets, transgender characters are consistent in nature with a more unidimensional approach. In addition, they each have their methods of expressing their sexual identity. All in dresses and wigs, Wan-jun takes photos of himself in his studio, Hyun-yi dances in the club, Fish strolls the streets at night, and grand prince Gyeseong wears makeup in an abandoned chamber. They each discover their ways to exist as women, though always get caught by others.

Since television dramas are mostly produced for and consumed by sexual majorities, the frames are shaped and stereotypes are reproduced in a way that can entertain the majority audience. For these reasons, an increase in exposure and enhancement in representation do not always mean that sexual minorities are candidly accepted the way they are. The media industry should not settle for the present but need to urge for a more critical view in facing the frame squarely.

3.5 SEXUALITY

The last chapter of the analysis is ‘Sexuality’, and it assays how relationships and desires are demonstrated in the narratives. According to Foucault (1990, 2023), sexuality is not naturally defined but is socially constructed by diverse power relations. The realm of sexuality virtually cannot be situated on the map as it has been mutated throughout history under the specification of individuals (Rivkin & Ryan, 2004; Sedgwick, 1990). Neither heterosexuality nor homosexuality is an ontological entity, as they are creations under “power relationships, systems of signs, cognitive maps, and political regimes” (Preciado, 2016, p. 408). States, institutions, and religions manipulate the boundaries of sexual identity, behavior, and knowledge to exercise their influence over sexuality as a site of power. For instance, the concept of homosexuality has gone through the process of erotic speciation, and homosexual behavior, which has been prevalent throughout history, is perceived distinctively across different societies and epochs (Rubin, 2012).

Sara Ahmed (2006) advocates with queer phenomenology that sexual orientation often “involves the translation of direction into identity” (p. 69). It is comprehended as something one ‘has’ and discerns the straight line from different lines. The normalization of heterosexuality leads to relating the direction of a straight line with positive values such as decency and honesty. In this way, sexual minorities have been considered deviant and irreverent for a long time. Based on the constructed boundary of compulsory able-bodied heterosexuality, the queer and disabled existence had been ostracized (McRuer, 2006). Hence, to measure power dynamics in television dramas and up to what extent sexual minorities are regulated, it is essential to analyze the portrayal of sexuality, especially emotional romance and physical intimacy of queer characters. They will be further examined in the ‘*Romance*’

and ‘*Intimacy*’ subchapters.

g. Romance

To begin with, the emotional romance of sexual minorities in dramas is also defined and manipulated under power relations. Even though the LGBTQ+ community has been considered taboo in the Korean media industry, the reason some dramas include minority romance into narratives is ironically to reinforce the majority power. The dramas formulate their own definitions for minority romance so that it does not harm existing social norms yet can entertain the majority audience (J. S. Kim & Min, 2012). The most popular method is to demonstrate homosexual romance as tragic love (Joo, 2003). Although most narratives tend to either utterly conceal or metaphorically hint at minority loves, in cases when they expose them on screen, they romanticize them as sacrificial, devoted, and idealistic (J. Hong, 2008). Such depiction seems positive, but it is an exquisite design to distract the majority audience from the essence of the problem. Eventually, it describes minority loves as unrealistic, unlike heterosexual romance where diverse down-to-earth barriers exist. As they are immaculately idealized, the majority audience, especially females, can acquire unique satisfaction apart from their gender role in the patriarchal society and safely fulfill their sexual desire (J. Kwon, 2019). Ultimately, amusement and stimulation are favorably consumed and then the real-life burden is removed from the discourse.

Among 25 dramas in the drama corpus, there is a total of 16 romance narratives with corresponding partners. As elucidated in <Figure 12>, (1) seven are about unrequited love (blue), (2) six are about tragic love (yellow), and (3) the other three are about consummated love that succeeds (green). As for the nine dramas excluded, four dramas have queer

characters but without any romance (red), and the other five dramas are non-applicable as they are about pseudo-homosexuality with no genuine queer characters (gray).

| | NAME | THEME | ROMANCE |
|----|----------------------------|-------------|---------|
| 1 | Coffee Prince | Gay | N/A |
| 2 | You're Beautiful | Gay | N/A |
| 3 | Life is Beautiful | Gay | ○ |
| 4 | Sungkyunkwan Scandal | Gay | N/A |
| 5 | Personal Taste | Gay | ○ |
| 6 | Reply 1994 | Bisexual | ○ |
| 7 | Schoolgirl Detectives | Lesbian | ○ |
| 8 | Love in the Moonlight | Gay | N/A |
| 9 | Cheese in the Trap | Gay | ○ |
| 10 | Strong Girl Bong-soon | Gay | ○ |
| 11 | Prison Playbook | Gay | ○ |
| 12 | Graceful Family | Transgender | x |
| 13 | Be Melodramatic | Gay | ○ |
| 14 | At Eighteen | Gay | ○ |
| 15 | Itaewon Class | Transgender | x |
| 16 | My Unfamiliar Family | Gay | ○ |
| 17 | Sweet Munchies | Gay | ○ |
| 18 | Vincenzo | Gay | ○ |
| 19 | Mine | Lesbian | ○ |
| 20 | The King's Affection | Gay | N/A |
| 21 | Hometown Cha-Cha-Cha | Lesbian | ○ |
| 22 | Under the Queen's Umbrella | Transgender | x |
| 23 | The Killer's Shopping List | Transgender | x |
| 24 | Extraordinary Attorney Woo | Lesbian | ○ |
| 25 | The Empire | Gay | ○ |

<Figure 12. Romance in Drama Corpus>

g.1 Consequence of Love

Firstly, seven loves are unrequited as queer characters come to fall in love with heterosexual characters. In *Personal Taste* (2010), *Reply 1994* (2013), *Strong Girl Bong-soon* (2017), *At Eighteen* (2019), *Sweet Munchies* (2020), *Vincenzo* (2021), and *Hometown Cha-Cha-Cha* (2021), queer characters confess their feelings towards heterosexual characters who are already in love with other heterosexual characters. Their loves cannot be answered from the start due to different sexual orientations. Consequently, they all get rejected either directly or indirectly.

One notable point is that in half of these seven narratives, homosexual characters come to fall for heterosexual characters as they deceive others that they are gay. *Personal Taste* (2010) and *Sweet Munchies* (2020) are sexuality deception dramas as explained in the previous chapter. The romantic emotions of genuine queer characters break down into pieces as heterosexual characters confide their lies about their sexuality. *Vincenzo* in *Vincenzo* (2021) also pretends to be gay to intentionally seduce Min-seong and succeeds in his plan. Similarly, in *Strong Girl Bong-soon* (2017), Odolbbyo is mesmerized by the boss, who is unintentionally at the center of a false rumor as gay but gives him up as it turns out to be erroneous and the boss starts to date the female protagonist. In the other three dramas, queer characters get attracted to heterosexual characters although they know they are straight, and thus, attempt to hide their feelings at the beginning but are turned down in the end.

Secondly, six couples are broken and last in tragic love. In *Schoolgirl Detectives* (2014-2015), *Mine* (2021), and *The Empire* (2022), homosexual couples break up due to fear. They are afraid of how their friends, families, and society will react to their relationship when revealed. They also fear the failure and discrimination they may bring upon themselves and

their partners. Hence, they decide to leave their lovers to protect both. As for *Mine* (2021), Seo-hyun resolves to come out and holds on to her partner in the last few episodes, but still is not getting a divorce from her husband. Besides, the other three couples break up due to personal issues. Joo-yong in *Cheese in the Trap* (2016) goes back to his wealthy family for a more desirable future and Herong in *Prison Playbook* (2017-2018) loses his partner due to drug addiction. In *My Unfamiliar Family* (2020), Dr. Yoon's partner does not even appear on screen and the reason they break up is not clear. Anyhow, he has a wife and was having an affair with his partner.

Fortunately, the last three couples in *Life is Beautiful* (2010), *Be Melodramatic* (2019), and *Extraordinary Attorney Woo* (2022) are successful in protecting their relationship. Of course, they struggle with family opposition and open discrimination. Especially, marriage often intrudes into their loves, as Kyung-soo in *Life is Beautiful* (2010) already has gone through marriage and divorce, and the bride in *Extraordinary Attorney Woo* (2022) gets close to getting married. They stay apart for a certain period due to such adversities but accomplish in surmounting them. It can be said that the couple in *Be Melodramatic* (2019) is the only pair that does not break up throughout the entire narrative.

g.2 Limitation in Love

In contrast, the remaining nine dramas do not contain any romantic relationships. The five are non-applicable in the first place as they are about pseudo-homosexuality with no actual homosexual characters. They are excluded from the discourse as they are consequently about heterosexual romance. Instead, it is essential to concentrate on the other half, as all of them are about transgender themes. Neither a corresponding partner nor romance appears in

dramas with transgender characters. In fact, in *Itaewon Class* (2020), there exists a slight emotional connection with the coworker, yet ambiguous to confirm whether it is friendship or the beginning of a romance. This limitation proves that the current Korean television industry has far to go in depicting the transgender community. The reason can be either that transgender romance is not stimulating for the majority audience or that transgender individuals are considered unable to form a wholesome family with children (Park & Lee, 2013).

To recapitulate, 16 out of 25 dramas in the corpus contain minority romance and 13 out of 16 loves conclude in misery, as they are either unrequited or broken. Their relationships often end with tragedy or unwanted marriage as if to prove that homosexual love cannot come true (Joo, 2003). The majority audience comes to appreciate the cliché of star-crossed lovers, whereas they are persuaded that there is an acceptable factor why they cannot be together. Only the stimulation originating from desperate and sacrificial love is consumed and then ends with rejection or separation, which eventually advocates heteronormativity. Likewise, as minority romance is depicted as unrealistic, the narratives distract audience from facing what is true and what is right.

h. Intimacy

In diverse media, especially comics or movies, queer characters are often demonstrated as obscene and sexual. For instance, the movies *The King and The Clown* (2005) and *Antique* (2008) implement close-up shots of certain body parts and display them as erotic objects (J. S. Kim & Min, 2012). The sexual touch is exaggerated as it gives a different pleasure from heterosexual love. On the contrary, this is not the case for television dramas. They prefer not

to contain any sexual scenes either directly or indirectly. It is comprehensible as unlike comics or movies, dramas are often open to a broad range of audiences. Accordingly, the level of physical intimacy cannot be as high as in OTT productions. Still, it is necessary to view how physical touch and sexual desires are illustrated for sexual minorities. Considering that television dramas broadcast physical attraction in heterosexual relationships such as kissing or metaphorical signals of sexual intercourse, there should be a comparative analysis of how sexual intimacy is portrayed for minority couples.

h.1 De-sexualization

Most television dramas tend to desexualize sexual minorities, as their sexuality and sexual desires are eradicated in the narratives (Fejes, 2000). For instance, gay characters are de-sexed and de-eroticized so that they do not threaten the traditional notions of masculinity. Hence, gay relationships are mostly portrayed as more of a close friendship than love. The reason for implementing de-sexualization is to cancel out all discourses on minor sexuality. By eliminating all factors of sexual desire, the majority audience can only appreciate idealized romance without any visual or emotional repulsion. That is to say, homosexual intercourses often project objects of abhorrence such as sperm or feces (Nussbaum, 2010). There is still a widespread bias that their promiscuous sexual activity leads to the high possibility of spreading AIDS (J. Hong, 2008). Therefore, dramas displace sexual intimacy and desire from the screen to avoid provoking any monopoly of knowledge that does not accept different sexuality (Joyce, 2013).

The dramas in the corpus also tend to focus more on queer couples' psychological depictions rather than physical ones (Joo, 2003). They mostly do not touch each other, and

even if they do, they end up holding hands, giving hugs, and kissing on the forehead. There is hardly any physical contact that crosses over this border. For example, Hyo-bong in *Be Melodramatic* (2019) does not touch his partner, but instead hugs his sister and her friends. They remain kiss-less and sex-less as if these forms of intimacy are perilous and forbidden. In fact, *Schoolgirl Detectives* (2014-2015) attempted to transgress this strict borderline by airing the kiss scene of a lesbian couple. Eventually, their unprecedented trial led to receiving a warning from the Korea Communications Standards Commission (I. Kim, 2015).

If not desexualized, queer characters' sexual desire is frequently exhibited as a sign of danger, which is the opposite extreme. It is counted as perverted and impulsive craving, which should be avoided. It mostly occurs in situations where homosexual characters are attracted to heterosexuals. They give heterosexual characters a lustful look and outwardly express their desire for the body. In *Prison Playbook* (2017-2018), Yeom gropes Je-hyuk, a heterosexual character, around the neck and sniffs as he says, "You know, athlete's sweat smells good." Besides, in *Vincenzo* (2021), Min-seong grabs Vincenzo on the chest or kisses him on the cheek and overreacts when there is a physical touch. Though it is Vincenzo who is maliciously deceiving Min-seong, it is Min-seong who is depicted to enjoy dense sexual interaction, and accordingly, perilous. Either way, the demonstrations equally result from fearing and ostracizing their sexual desires.

h.2 Editing Technique

Even the minimal physical contacts and sexual desires are portrayed under certain editing techniques. Television does not explicitly display sexual minorities but implements camera works and description methods to comply with social norms (Joo, 2003). These

devices become the packaging of controversial physical touches when entering the screen. They can be divided into three parts: (1) mise-en-scene, (2) compression and omission, and (3) retrospection.

Firstly, dramas utilize ‘mise-en-scene’, especially visual aesthetics, to make the scene more hypnotizing (J. Hong, 2008; Joo, 2003). Dreamlike filters, sparkles, or slow-motion techniques are employed to adorn the moments when queer characters touch their partners. Likewise, the touch may seem more enchanting, yet unrealistic. For instance, <Figure 13> demonstrates how dim filters are used to make the faerie and aerial mood when a lesbian couple in *Mine* (2021) touches each other. When they run while holding their hands, slow motion techniques and soft background music with chirping sounds are implemented to intensify the atmosphere. The drama mystifies their physical attraction with beauty as if there is something to conceal.



<Figure 13. *Mine* Scene> (tvN, 2021b)

Secondly, ‘compression and omission’ techniques are employed to implicitly symbolize any sexual contact (Joo, 2003). Since it is obvious yet hidden, audience cannot see it but can estimate what happens behind the camera frame. Nonetheless, they cannot accuse of sexual intimacy outside the angle. For example, in *Prison Playbook* (2017-2018), Herong and his partner stand behind the curtain on New Year’s Eve. As soon as the clock strikes twelve and people yell out a cheer, they disappear into the curtain and what audience can witness is two feet standing close as in <Figure 14>. In addition, in *Life is Beautiful* (2010), Kyung-soo pulls his partner and conceals themselves behind the wall. Only the wriggling fingers of his partner linger on the screen and then disappear. The camera focus moves to the red flowers which indicate their physical contact as in <Figure 15>. In this way, the camera intentionally misses the physical touches as if to avoid any responsibility.



<Figure 14. *Prison Playbook* Scene> (tvN, 2017)

<Figure 15. *Life is Beautiful* Scene> (SBS, 2010)

Lastly, the ‘retrospective’ description persuades audience that the sexual contact occurred in the past (Joo, 2003). Through reminiscence, the parted minority lovers hark back to the old days with their partners and the physical interaction they shared. Both scenes of <Figure 13> and <Figure 14> happen not in the present but in the past. Again, the drama attributes the responsibility to the past and stresses that minority couples are apart in the present timeline.

Interestingly, pseudo-homosexuality dramas become an exception in portraying sexual touch and desire, as they eventually are heterosexual narratives. Even when the heterosexual male characters recognize the female characters as male, there exists a higher amount of physical contact. In *Coffee Prince* (2007), Han-kyul kisses as a prank in the beginning, and later, out of love. They lie down together and hug each other in almost every episode without any editing techniques mentioned above. *You’re Beautiful* (2009) and *The King’s Affection* (2021) also contain explicit kiss scenes whereas they know each other as men. The male characters’ masculine physicality is emphasized as they easily undress themselves and touch female characters under gender disguise. Thus, in pseudo-homosexuality narratives, sexual tension is not a taboo anymore. It is the symbol of healthy and romantic attraction that even overcome the barrier of deception.

In conclusion, for sexual minorities in television dramas, romance is partially allowed, while physical touch and sexual desire are still thoroughly regulated. Love, which all human beings are entitled to, is only partially and even biasedly represented to the audience. The depiction of love, encompassing both emotional romance and physical affection, becomes

evidence that an increase in exposure in dramas alone does not necessarily indicate a parallel increase in candid and open discourse on sexual minorities.

4. DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

4.1 Prospects and Limitations

Mainstream television often is assumed to be a transparent mediator of reality that display “what things are, how they work, and why” (L. Gross, 2020, p. 143). Although viewers are aware of the fictiveness of its content, mass media still accounts for the basis of “many components of our knowledge of the real world” (p. 144). Television especially takes a crucial role when speaking about minority groups, as it possesses a massive power in cultivating images when they are distant from the real lives of the majority audience (H. Lee & Ryu, 2018; Schiappa et al., 2006). Such became the starting point from which this research question sprouted. The power of media grounds the necessity of further research on television drama, one of the most accessible mass media, and its projection of the LGBTQ+ society. With the analysis of ‘Visibility’, ‘Representation’, ‘Disclosure’, ‘Framing’, and ‘Sexuality’, this dissertation investigates how and why sexual minorities appear on the television screen. The core that penetrates these five conceptual frameworks is power relations. They each operate to measure power inequality and repression, which is historically evident, and thus, firmly anchored to society (Foucault, 1990). The intrinsic mechanisms of power are dissected in five different facets and question whether they remain solid or have shown improvements.

Firstly, in the aspect of ‘Visibility’, both exposure and diversity have expanded over time. More dramas with queer characters are produced and various sexual orientations and identities are introduced on screen. It is affirmative as power dynamics often define what is to be displayed on screen. However, there is a limitation that most characters appear in supporting roles and there still needs more diversity other than gay, lesbian, bisexual, and

transgender characters.

Secondly, the 'Representation' is realistic as the dramas manage to elucidate the detailed position of queer characters. Those portrayals explicitly project the reality where different sexual orientation or identity is considered a weak point. In the drama corpus, queer characters are often openly denounced, become the cause of family destruction, and undergo loveless marriage. As more queer characters mean more queer discourses, their positions are plainly unveiled in diverse narratives, though mostly skewed to negative dimensions.

Thirdly, despite the prevalence of 'Disclosure' narratives throughout the timeline, half of them contain unwanted outings. They are either for personal benefit, explanation, entertainment, or accusation. As for the reactions to coming out, only two narratives display positive responses and the others either demonstrate neutral, negative, or mixed responses. Again, the rise in disclosure discourses itself is positive, yet there need further diversification in depiction as well as awareness of involuntary outings.

Fourthly, there are limitations in 'Framing' as the dramas implement LGBTQ+ themes to ultimately reinforce heteronormativity or shape their characteristics to reproduce stereotypes. Whereas the previous three chapters investigate how queer characters are illustrated in narratives, this chapter strictly examines for whom they are represented. As minority characters are framed to fit into the existing societal norms and entertain the majority audience, there should be a more critical insight to inspect the power relations in their manifestation.

Lastly, as for 'Sexuality', the minority romance and intimacy are selectively manipulated and concealed. Many love narratives often conclude in tragedy, either unrequited or broken. They perform to render the majority audience to enjoy the stimulation but perceive

them as unrealistic. As for physical contact and desire, they are either largely desexualized, considered hazardous, or hidden under various editing techniques. The minority loves are thoroughly regulated on screen not to give the majority audience any emotional or visual repulsion.

These five chapters of analysis serve as five different lenses in exploring power relations in Korean media as well as society. They seek whether there are queer characters on screen, and if so, who they are, how they are displayed, and why they appear in narratives. Overall, they assert the positive aspects of having more queer discourses on screen, but also acknowledge the drawbacks in that some still reinforce the dominant system. This research can be further summarized by pinpointing the consequential prospects and limitations of LGBTQ+-related dramas which can be deduced from the analysis.

As for the prospects, the visibility of queer characters has gradually increased entering the 21st century. Although there still exist dramas of pseudo-homosexuality in which they employ only the homosexual theme and no genuine queer character, there is an exponential growth in dramas with more than one and even three queer characters. Apart from the reason or importance of these characters, it is evident that the LGBTQ+ community gained visibility over “death by neglect” (Thompson, 2005). Consequently, diverse narratives dealing with their positions and disclosures could have been represented on screen. Being exposed to society can be the beginning of all discourses and possibilities.

In addition, some dramas commenced proposing messages through characters and narratives. They do not use LGBTQ+ merely to attract audience but contain meanings within the plot. It includes families and friends behaving naturally and even embracing queer characters when coming out. In *Mine* (2021), Seo-hyun is impressed by the painting of an

elephant stuck in a narrow door as she reflects on herself. To her question on how the elephant can escape, the painter answers, “The wall was never there. The elephant just thought it was there.” It is the moment she discovers that what had been constraining her was herself and determines to reveal her true self. Moreover, in *Itaewon Class* (2020), there is a poem a friend reads to Hyun-yi. The poem goes, “I am a rock. Go ahead and sear me. I will not budge an inch because I am a rock. Go ahead and beat me up. I am a solid rock. Go ahead and leave me in darkness. I am a rock that shines all alone. I do not break, ash, or decay as I go against nature’s way. I survive. I am the diamond.” After listening to it, Hyun-yi decides to open herself to the public and overcome all the stereotypes against her.

Likewise, by channeling the voices of the characters, these dramas convey messages to the sexual minority audience to be themselves and free themselves. These are the messages not only to the queer characters in the narratives, but also to the queer individuals in society. Their struggles can bring courage and consolation to the minority audience, while also raising awareness among the majority audience. Either way, they are all possible because they are visible.

Nevertheless, the dramas are yet to center the narratives on discussing sexual minority rights and discrimination they are facing. If they are to naturalize them, it may be a success, but it is important to consider why all the dramas in the corpus only sweep the issue over a couple of episodes. According to David M. Halperin (2003), queer theory has become increasingly normalized and rapidly expanding in scope but is limited in its depth of analysis. He urges that society should not settle in the present but induce the radical potential to make changes. Such can also be related to queer discourses in television dramas. It is affirmative that queer characters’ identity and presence are continuously mentioned and not neglected to

symbolic annihilation (Gerbner & Gross, 1976). However, it is pivotal to doubt why only one among 25 dramas has queer character as the main protagonist, and not one narrative is solely focused on the queer issue itself. Naturalizing and normalizing the community is not pessimistic, but there is still a necessity to enlarge its radical potential to shed more light on LGBTQ+ rights and their realities.

Furthermore, it is essential to question whether the enhancement in visibility truly means a rise in sexual minority status. As mentioned in the prospects, some dramas indeed have been successful in giving positive messages throughout the narratives. Nonetheless, it is also true that they are mostly produced to appeal to the majority audience (H. Lee, 2009). Unlike independent movies and drama specials, television dramas with queer characters are produced “by” the majority community to profit “from” the majority community. H. Lee explains the irony of sexual minorities being ostracized from both production and consumption of homosexual media. There are stark power dynamics beneath as majorities purchase the display of minorities and amuse them in the shape they prefer. As a result, queer characters are framed and their sexuality is cropped to conform to the existing system for the majority. Hence, sexual minorities are once again isolated from the boundary.

4.2 Necessity and Potentiality

It is crucial to discuss not only the successes but also the failures. According to Judith Halberstam (2011), failure, as “the weapons of the weak”, exploits the unpredictability of the dominant system and suggests the possibility of a more creative and cooperative solution (p. 88). Failure recognizes that alternatives to dominance are readily embedded within as power is never total or consistent. Therefore, we should consider the triumphs, but most importantly,

the failures to pave a new way to progress.

In fact, it is what this dissertation has done so far. By figuring out the triumphs and failures of queer characters within the narratives, the research question of how the LGBTQ+ community is represented in television dramas is answered. The importance of this research is that it attempted to extend the understanding of LGBTQ+ in the Korean media industry. Not concentrating on a single individual, orientation, identity, or production, this research covers diverse LGBTQ+ communities in television dramas and even considers the latest productions. These findings enable us to explore the recent changes and remaining tasks within the broad dataset of drama corpus. It is a bold venture to embrace the past, present, and future of LGBTQ+-related television dramas.

The concept of “media sociology” makes these findings more pivotal (Waisbord, 2014). The characters and narratives in dramas are often considered merely fictional, and thus, able to dismiss. Nonetheless, each queer character is the projection of the queer individuals around us, and each narrative is the recreation of the events occurring in society. They are the mirror to reflect on the reality in which sexual majorities and minorities interact. Conversely, audience also comes to comprehend society and even structure experiences from their representations (McLuhan, 2010). It is a perpetuating cycle of society influencing media and media affecting society. Hence, exploring LGBTQ+-related dramas can help understand how society perceives the LGBTQ+ community and what messages are delivered to society. Especially within the Korean wave, or *Hallyu*, in which Korean dramas possess a myriad of international fans and even are transnationally recreated, the cycle enlarges in scale followed by increased impact in how the global public recognizes the minority community (Ju, 2018). That being the case, media researchers should contemplate how their studies can intervene

within this cycle and create positive changes. This is why I decided to join the spinning wheel and find the answer to the question.

Based on this research, which is centered on television dramas, there can be further investigation into various media platforms. The research subject can be other forms of dramas, such as web dramas, and even social media. It will also be insightful to compare media productions across diverse platforms or different countries. In this regard, there will be a more extensive comprehension of the LGBTQ+ community in the Korean media industry. This research can be the starting point as well as the basis for further comparative studies over a variety of media productions. It adds to the hope to provide the current Korean media industry with guidance on how to deal with media in the direction of fairly representing, and ultimately, going along with the LGBTQ+ community.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ahmed, S. (2006). *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*. *Queer Phenomenology*. Duke University Press. <https://muse.jhu.edu/book/70074>
- Ayoub, P. M., & Garretson, J. (2017). Getting the Message Out: Media Context and Global Changes in Attitudes Toward Homosexuality. *Comparative Political Studies*, *50*(8), 1055–1085. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414016666836>
- Bae, J. (2023). *How Does Power Shape Witnessing?*
- Baiocco, R., Fontanesi, L., Santamaria, F., Ioverno, S., Baumgartner, E., & Laghi, F. (2016). Coming out during adolescence: Perceived parents' reactions and internalized sexual stigma. *Journal of Health Psychology*, *21*(8), 1809–1813. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1359105314564019>
- Barry, C. A. (1998). Choosing Qualitative Data Analysis Software: Atlas/ti and Nudist Compared. *Sociological Research Online*, *3*(3), 16–28. <https://doi.org/10.5153/sro.178>
- Benjamin, R. (2019). *Race after technology: Abolitionist tools for the new Jim code*. Polity Press.
- Bielby, D. D., Harrington, C. L., & Bielby, W. T. (1999). Whose stories are they? Fans' engagement with soap opera narratives in three sites of fan activity. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, *43*(1), 35–51. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08838159909364473>
- Bong, Y. D. (2008). The Gay Rights Movement in Democratizing Korea. *Korean Studies*, *32*(1), 86–103. <https://doi.org/10.1353/ks.0.0013>
- Bourdieu, P. (2011). *The field of cultural production: Essays on art and literature* (Reprinted).

Polity Press.

Bryman, A. (2016). *Social research methods* (Fifth Edition). Oxford University Press.

Bucher, J. (2014). 'But He Can't Be Gay': The Relationship Between Masculinity and Homophobia in Father-Son Relationships. *The Journal of Men's Studies*, 22(3), 222–237. <https://doi.org/10.3149/jms.2203.222>

Butler, J. (2009). *PERFORMATIVITY, PRECARIETY AND SEXUAL POLITICS*. AIBR. Revista de Antropología Iberoamericana. www.aibr.org Volumen 4, Número 3. Septiembre-Diciembre 2009.

Chatman, S. (2007). *Story and discourse: Narrative structure in fiction and film* (8th pbk. printing). Cornell University Press.

Cho, S. Y. (2012). Homosexuality in the TV Drama: On Beautiful Life. *The Journal of Korean Drama and Theatre*, null(35), 365–401. <https://doi.org/10.17938/TJKDAT.2012..35.365>

Chrisler, A. J. (2017). Understanding Parent Reactions to Coming Out as Lesbian, Gay, or Bisexual: A Theoretical Framework: Parent Reactions to Coming Out. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, 9(2), 165–181. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jftr.12194>

Coleman, R. (2010). *Framing the Pictures in Our Heads*. Routledge.

Craig, S. L., McInroy, L., McCready, L. T., & Alaggia, R. (2015). Media: A Catalyst for Resilience in Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Youth. *Journal of LGBT Youth*, 12(3), 254–275. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19361653.2015.1040193>

Davin, S., & Jackson, R. (2008). *Television and criticism*. Intellect.

Doo, J. A. (2010, September 29). *Be Responsible for My Son Becoming a 'Gay' After Watching*

SBS 'Life is Beautiful'.

Du Gay, P., Hall, S., Janes, L., Mackay, H., & Negus, K. (1997). *Doing cultural studies: The story of the Sony Walkman*. Sage, in association with The Open University.

ENA. (2022). *Extraordinary Attorney Woo*.

http://ena.skylifetv.co.kr/bbs/board.php?bo_table=skydrama&wr_id=113&sca=%EC%B5%9C%EC%8B%A0

Entman, R. M. (1993). Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm. *Journal of Communication* 43 (4), 1993, 51-58., 10.

Equaldex. (2023). *LGBT Equality Index*. Equaldex. <https://www.equaldex.com/equality-index>

Fairclough, N. (1995). *Critical discourse analysis: The critical study of language*. Longman.

Fairclough, N. (2012). Critical discourse analysis. *The Routledge Handbook of Discourse Analysis*.

Fejes, F. (2000). "Making a gay masculinity". *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 17(1), 113–116. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15295030009388382>

Foucault, M. (1990). *The history of sexuality. Vol. 1: An introduction* (Reprint, Vol. 1). Penguin Books.

Foucault, M. (1991). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison* (Reprint). Penguin Books.

Foucault, M. (2013). *Archaeology of Knowledge* (2nd ed). Taylor and Francis.

Foucault, M. (2023). The Subject and Power. *Critical Inquiry, Summer, 1982, Vol. 8, No. 4* (Summer, 1982), Pp. 777-795.

Foucault, M., & Gordon, C. (2010). *Power/knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings 1972-1977* (Nachdr.). Pearson Education.

Gerbner, G., & Gross, L. (1976). Living with Television: The Violence Profile. *Journal of Communication*, 26(2), 172–199. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1976.tb01397.x>

Gibbs, G. R. (2018). *Analyzing Qualitative Data*. SAGE Publications Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781526441867>

Gitlin, T. (2003). *The whole world is watching: Mass media in the making & unmaking of the New Left*. University of California Press.

Goodrich, K. M. (2009). Mom and Dad Come Out: The Process of Identifying as a Heterosexual Parent with a Lesbian, Gay, or Bisexual Child. *Journal of LGBT Issues in Counseling*, 3(1), 37–61. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15538600902754478>

Gould, D. B. (2009). *Moving politics: Emotion and act up's fight against AIDS*. The University of Chicago Press.

Gross, L. (2020). 8. What Is Wrong with This Picture? Lesbian Women and Gay Men on Television. In R. J. Ringer (Ed.), *Queer Words, Queer Images* (pp. 143–156). New York University Press. <https://doi.org/10.18574/nyu/9780814769447.003.0012>

Gross, L. P. (2001). *Up from invisibility: Lesbians, gay men, and the media in America / Larry Gross*. New York.

Guittar, N. A. (2013). The Meaning of Coming Out: From Self-Affirmation to Full Disclosure. *Qualitative Sociology Review*, 9(3), 168–187. <https://doi.org/10.18778/1733-8077.9.3.09>

Halberstam, J. (2011). *The queer art of failure*. Duke University Press.

Halberstam, J. (2018). *Female masculinity* (Twentieth anniversary edition with a new preface). Duke University Press.

Hall, S. (1980). *Culture, Media Language* (Second Edition). Routledge.

Hall, S., Evans, J., & Nixon, S. (Eds.). (2013). *Representation* (Second edition). Sage ; The Open University.

Halperin, D. M. (2003). The Normalization of Queer Theory. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 45(2–4), 339–343. https://doi.org/10.1300/J082v45n02_17

Han, C., & Yook, J. (Directors). (2019). *Graceful Family*.

Han, D. (2008). Production and Distribution's Effective Study for Popularized Conversation of Korea Independent Film. *The Journal of the Korea Contents Association*, 8(1), 367–376. <https://doi.org/10.5392/JKCA.2008.8.1.367>

Herdt, G. H., & Koff, B. (2000). *Something to tell you: The road families travel when a child is gay*. Columbia University Press.

Herek, G. M. (1988). Heterosexuals' attitudes toward lesbians and gay men: Correlates and gender differences. *Journal of Sex Research*, 25(4), 451–477. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224498809551476>

Herek, G. M. (2007). Confronting Sexual Stigma and Prejudice: Theory and Practice: Confronting Sexual Stigma and Prejudice. *Journal of Social Issues*, 63(4), 905–925. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.2007.00544.x>

Hill, N. L. (2009). Affirmative Practice and Alternative Sexual Orientations: Helping Clients Navigate the Coming Out Process. *Clinical Social Work Journal*, 37(4), 346–356.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10615-009-0240-2>

Hong, J. (2008). *The Romantic Homo Sexuality and Love Oriented Narrative in The Drama <The First Coffee Prince>* (vol.22, no.1, pp. 162-200 (39 pages)). Korean Journal of Broadcasting and Telecommunication Studies.

Hong, S. (Director). (2009). *You're Beautiful*.

Horkheimer, M., & Adorno, T. W. (2020). The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception. In *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (pp. 94–136). Stanford University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1515/9780804788090-007>

Jang, C., Lim, C., & Kim, S. (2022). *A Case Study on the Content Production Capabilities of Local OTT Service Providers: Focusing on TVING, Wavve, Kakaotv and Netflix* (vol.36, no.1, pp. 1-35 (35 pages)). Korean Journal of Broadcasting and Telecommunication Studies.

Jeong, E. (Director). (2010). *Life is Beautiful*.

Jin, D. Y. (2016). *New Korean wave: Transnational cultural power in the age of social media*. University of Illinois Press.

Jin, D. Y., & Kwak, N. (Eds.). (2018). *Communication, digital media, and popular culture in Korea: Contemporary research and future prospects*. Lexington Books.

Joo, C. Y. (2003). The Narrative Structures of Gay and Lesbian Television Dramas. *Korean Journal of Journalism & Communication Studies (KJJCS)*, 2003, 47, no.3, pp. 198-223 (26 pages).

Joyce, S. N. (2013). *A Kiss Is (Not) Just a Kiss: Heterodeterminism, Homosexuality, and TV Globo Telenovelas*. *International Journal of Communication*, vol. 7, 2013, pp. 48–66.

JTBC. (2017). *Strong Girl Bong-soon Characters*. <https://tv.jtbc.co.kr/cast/PR10010452/26>

Ju, H. (2017). National television moves to the region and beyond: South Korean TV drama production with a new cultural act. *The Journal of International Communication*, 23(1), 94–114. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13216597.2017.1291443>

Ju, H. (2018). The Korean Wave and Korean Dramas. In H. Ju, *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Communication*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.013.715>

Kang, N. (2020, December 13). *The Age of 'Homo', Did the Name Change?: Human Rights and Welfare: Society: News: Hankyeorae Newspaper*. <https://www.hani.co.kr/arti/society/rights/965514.html>

Kim, H. (Director). (2022). *Under the Queen's Umbrella*.

Kim, H., & Ham, S. (Directors). (2021). *Vincenzo*.

Kim, I. (2015, April 23). *Korea Communication Standards Commission, Warning JTBC Drama for Airing High School Girls Kiss Scene*. <https://www.yna.co.kr/view/AKR20150423193500033>

Kim, J. (2012). Korean LGBT: Trial, Error, and Success. *Cornell International Affairs Review*, 5(2). <https://doi.org/10.37513/ciar.v5i2.426>

Kim, J. S. (2012). *A Study on Audience's Interpretation of Drama <Life is Beautiful>*. *Journal of Media, Economics, and Culture*; G704-001893.2012.10.1.002.

Kim, J. S., & Min, Y. (2012). *Visual Frames of Homosexuality in Popular Korean Films: On King and the Clown, A Frozen Flower, and Western Antique Bakery*. *Media, Gender & Culture*.

Kim, S., & Baek, S. (Directors). (2016). *Love in the Moonlight*.

Kim, S., & Kang, M. (Directors). (2020). *Itaewon Class*.

Kim, W., & Hwang, I. (Directors). (2010). *Sungkyunkwan Scandal*.

Kim, Y. (2007, August 28). 'Coffee Prince' Come to an End with 27.8% Viewing Rate.
<https://www.hani.co.kr/arti/culture/entertainment/232003.html>.

Kwon, J. (2019). *Straight Korean Female Fans and Their Gay Fantasies*. University of Iowa Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvdtpjh5>

Kwon, Y. (Director). (2020). *My Unfamiliar Family*.

LaSala, M. C. (2010). *Coming out, coming home: Helping families adjust to a gay or lesbian child*. Columbia University Press.

Lee, B., & Kim, H. (Directors). (2019). *Be Melodramatic*.

Lee, E. (2021). A Qualitative Study on the Existential Process in the Coming-Out Experience of LGBTQ Parents. *The Journal of Anthropology of Education (Jae)*, 2021, 24, no.2, pp. 27-76 (50 pages). <https://doi.org/10.17318/jae.2021.24.2.002>

Lee, E. (Director). (2022). *The Killer's Shopping List*.

Lee, H. (2009). *The Politics of Visual Pleasure in Homosexual Films: On Brokeback Mountain, Antique, and Ssanghwajom* (vol.10, no.2, pp. 431-460 (30 pages)). the Journal of Literature And Film [Moonhakgua Yeongsang].

Lee, H. (Director). (2017). *Strong Girl Bong-soon*.

Lee, H., & Ryu, S. (2018). Recognition Effect of Cultural Contents: Focusing on Changes in

Perception of Sexual Minority. *The Journal of the Korea Contents Association*, 18(7), 84–94.
<https://doi.org/10.5392/JKCA.2018.18.07.084>

Lee, J. (2012). Representation of Homosexuality and Related Discourse in <Life is Beautiful>. *The Journal of the Korea Contents Association*, 12(12), 555–566.
<https://doi.org/10.5392/JKCA.2012.12.12.555>

Lee, J. (2014). 'Hyung Young Dang Diary' Aired Against Homophobic Protest, Nevertheless.
https://star.ohmynews.com/NWS_Web/OhmyStar/at_pg.aspx?CNTN_CD=A0002049418

Lee, N., Oh, S., & Kim, H. (Directors). (2021). *Mine*.

Lee, W. (2022, December 18). 'Father Who Grabbed a Knife When Coming Out, Sever Relations for 10 Years' From Being a "Son to Daughter".
<https://sports.chosun.com/news/ntype.htm?id=202212190100121640014947&servicedate=20221218>

Lee, Y. (Director). (2007). *Coffee Prince*.

Lee, Y. (Director). (2016). *Cheese in the Trap*.

Lippmann, W. (2004). *Public opinion*. Dover Publications.

Longan, M. W., Bialasiewicz, L., Morley, D., & Robins, K. (1997). Spaces of Identity: Global Media, Electronic Landscapes and Cultural Boundaries. *Geographical Review*, 87(3), 429.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/216048>

Lum, C. M. K. (2014). Contexts, Concepts, and Currents. *The Handbook of Media and Mass Communication Theory*.

Mackenzie, S. (2013). *Structural intimacies: Sexual stories in the black AIDS epidemic*.

Rutgers University Press.

Mayeza, E. (2021). South African LGBTPQ Youth: The Perceptions and Realities of Coming out and Parental Reactions. *Journal of GLBT Family Studies*, 17(3), 292–303. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1550428X.2021.1897051>

McLuhan, M. (2010). *Understanding media: The extensions of man* (Repr). Routledge.

McPherson, E. (2022). Witnessing: Iteration and social change. *AI & SOCIETY*, s00146-022-01508-w. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00146-022-01508-w>

McRuer, R. (2006). *Crip theory: Cultural signs of queerness and disability*. New York University Press.

Mogul, J. L., Ritchie, A. J., & Whitlock, K. (2011). *Queer (in)justice: The criminalization of LGBT people in the United States*. Beacon ; Publishers Group UK [distributor].

Mulla, T. (2022). Assessing the factors influencing the adoption of over-the-top streaming platforms: A literature review from 2007 to 2021. *Telematics and Informatics*, 69, 101797. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.2022.101797>

Nussbaum, M. C. (2010). *From disgust to humanity: Sexual orientation and constitutional law*. Oxford University Press.

Orgad, S. (2014). *Media Representation and the Global Imagination*. Wiley.

Park, J. H. (2018). Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Studies. *Digital Media*, 18. Communication, Digital Media, and Popular Culture in Korea : Contemporary Research and Future Prospects, edited by Dal Yong Jin, and Nojin Kwak, Lexington Books.

Park, J. H. (2021). *Main Issues and Goals of Early Korean Independent Queer Film: Interviews*

with Directors (no.1, pp. 181-230 (50 pages)). *Media, Gender & Culture*.

Park, J. H., & Lee, J. (2013). *Korean Media's Perspectives on Sexual Minority: Televisual Images of Hong Suk-Chon and Ha Ri-Su* (vol., no.28, pp. 5-42 (38 pages)). *Media, Gender & Culture*.

Paulus, T. M., & Lester, J. N. (2016). ATLAS.ti for conversation and discourse analysis studies. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 19(4), 405–428. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2015.1021949>

Postman, N. (2000). *The Humanism of Media Ecology*. Proceedings of the Media Ecology Association, Volume 1, 2000.

Preciado, P. B. (2016). Politically Assisted Procreation and State Heterosexualism (K. G. Dunn, Trans.). *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 115(2), 405–410. <https://doi.org/10.1215/00382876-3488502>

Pullen, C., & Cooper, M. (Eds.). (2010). *LGBT identity and online new media*. Routledge.

Reese, S. D., Gandy, Jr., & Grant, A. E. (Eds.). (2001). Prologue—Framing Public Life: A Bridging Model for Media Research. In *Framing Public Life* (0 ed., pp. 23–48). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781410605689-7>

Riggle, E. D. B., Ellis, A. L., & Crawford, A. M. (1996). The Impact of “Media Contact” on Attitudes Toward Gay Men. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 31(3), 55–69. https://doi.org/10.1300/J082v31n03_04

Rivkin, J., & Ryan, M. (Eds.). (2004). *Literary theory: An anthology* (2nd ed). Blackwell Pub.

Robinson, B. A. (2016). Heteronormativity and Homonormativity. In A. Wong, M.

Wickramasinghe, renee hoogland, & N. A. Naples (Eds.), *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Gender and Sexuality Studies* (pp. 1–3). John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118663219.wbegss013>

Rubin, G. S. (2012). *Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality*. <https://doi.org/Skip Nav Destination BOOK CHAPTER Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality> <https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822394068-006>

Ryan, C., Huebner, D., Diaz, R. M., & Sanchez, J. (2009). Family Rejection as a Predictor of Negative Health Outcomes in White and Latino Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Young Adults. *Pediatrics*, *123*(1), 346–352. <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2007-3524>

Ryan, C., Russell, S. T., Huebner, D., Diaz, R., & Sanchez, J. (2010). Family Acceptance in Adolescence and the Health of LGBT Young Adults: Family Acceptance in Adolescence and the Health of LGBT Young Adults. *Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Nursing*, *23*(4), 205–213. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6171.2010.00246.x>

Ryu, J., & Kwon, Y. (Directors). (2021). *Hometown Cha-Cha-Cha*.

Saltzburg, S. (2004). Learning That an Adolescent Child Is Gay or Lesbian: The Parent Experience. *Social Work*, *49*(1), 109–118. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sw/49.1.109>

Sandler, E. T. (2022). An overview of coming out research: Introducing a three-lens typology. *Sociology Compass*, *16*(2). <https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12958>

SBS. (2010). *Life is Beautiful*. <https://programs.sbs.co.kr/drama/beautifullife/about/55978>

Schiappa, E., Gregg, P. B., & Hewes, D. E. (2006). Can One TV Show Make a Difference? A Will & Grace and the Parasocial Contact Hypothesis. *Journal of Homosexuality*, *51*(4), 15–37. https://doi.org/10.1300/J082v51n04_02

Scott, D. T. (2018). 'Coming out of the closet' – examining a metaphor. *Annals of the International Communication Association*, 42(3), 145–154.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/23808985.2018.1474374>

Sedgwick, E. K. (1990). *Epistemology of the closet*. University of California Press.

Seiter, E. (1986). Stereotypes and the Media: A Re-evaluation. *Journal of Communication*, 36(2), 14–26. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1986.tb01420.x>

Seo, D. (2001). Mapping the Vicissitudes of Homosexual Identities in South Korea. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 40(3–4), 65–78. https://doi.org/10.1300/J082v40n03_04

Seo, D. (2005). *Human Rights, Citizenship and Sexuality*. Journal of Economy and Society.

Seo, J. (2010). Homo Sacer in Korea: Same-Sex Marriage Is Same-Sex Marriage in Korea The elephant in the room? *Wonguang Beophak*, 26(2), 109–148.

Seo, Y., Lee, J., & Cha, J. (2006). The Effects of Gender Role Attitudes, Religiosity, Authoritarianism, and Cultural Values on Korean College Students' Homophobia. *The Korean Journal of Counseling and Psychotherapy*, Vol.18, No. 1, 177-199.

Shim, N. (Director). (2019). *At Eighteen*.

Shin, W. (Director). (2013). *Reply 1994*.

Shin, W. (Director). (2017, 2018). *Prison Playbook*.

Shrum, L. J. (1995). Assessing the Social Influence of Television: A Social Cognition Perspective on Cultivation Effects. *Communication Research*, 22(4), 402–429.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/009365095022004002>

Slater, M. D., Rouner, D., & Long, M. (2006). Television Dramas and Support for Controversial

Public Policies: Effects and Mechanisms. *Journal of Communication*, 56(2), 235–252.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2006.00017.x>

Solomon, D., McAbee, J., Åsberg, K., & McGee, A. (2015). Coming Out and the Potential for Growth in Sexual Minorities: The Role of Social Reactions and Internalized Homonegativity. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 62(11), 1512–1538.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2015.1073032>

Son, H., & Roh, J. (Directors). (2010). *Personal Taste*.

Song, H. (Director). (2021). *The King's Affection*.

Song, J. (Director). (2020). *Sweet Munchies*.

Stonewall. (2018). *Stonewall Global Workplace Briefings 2018 SOUTH KOREA*.
stonewall.org.uk

Story J Company. (2021). *Vincenzo*.
<https://m.post.naver.com/viewer/postView.nhn?memberNo=46966513&volumeNo=30888214>

Thompson, J. B. (2005). The New Visibility. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 22(6), 31–51.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276405059413>

tvN. (2017, 2018). *Prison Playbook*. <https://tvn.cjenm.com/ko/prisonplaybook/>

tvN. (2021a). *Hometown Cha-Cha-Cha*. <https://tvn.cjenm.com/ko/chachacha/>

tvN. (2021b). *Mine*. <https://tvn.cjenm.com/ko/mine/photo/>

van Dijk, T. A. (2015). 22 Critical Discourse Analysis. 2015 *John Wiley & Sons, Inc., The Handbook of Discourse Analysis, Second Edition*.

Waisbord, S. (2014). *Media sociology: A reappraisal*. Polity Press.

Walker, J. R., & Ferguson, D. A. (1998). *The broadcast television industry*. Allyn and Bacon.

Warner, M. (1991). *Introduction: Fear of a Queer Planet*. *Social Text*, 1991, No. 29 (1991), pp. 3–17. Duke University Press.

Yeo, W., & Ryu, J. (Directors). (2014, 2015). *Schoolgirl Detectives*.

Yi, H., Luhur, W., & Brown, T. N. T. (2019). *Public Opinion of Transgender Rights in South Korea*. UCLA Williams Institute.

Yoo, H. (Director). (2022). *The Empire*.

Yoo, I. (Director). (2022). *Extraordinary Attorney Woo*.

Yoon, K. (2018). *Digital Media and Culture in Korea*. 16. *Communication, Digital Media, and Popular Culture in Korea: Contemporary Research and Future Prospects*, Lexington Books (pp.283-300).

Zeidner, M., & Endler, N. S. (Eds.). (1996). *Handbook of coping: Theory, research, applications*. Wiley.